

"THE SAINT"—in a Grand LESLIE CHARTERIS Story—Inside!

THE
THRILLER **2^D**
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MAN
TRAP

THE SHADOW TRAPPED AT LAST!

MAXWELL GRANT'S FINEST STORY

THE POLICEMAN

The affair of the vanishing policeman meant danger—and loot—for the SAINT. So far he had experienced more of one than the other, but there was time to collect!

"THAT'S NOT DYSON!"

MR. SEBASTIAN ALDO lived with his niece, Betty, at Newton Abbot, Devonshire, and he was in trouble. There were shadowy individuals who wanted his house so badly that when he refused to sell they grew violent about it. Affairs came to a head when a policeman arrived and requested Mr. Aldo to accompany him to the local station for certain formalities connected with an accident. Mr. Aldo went—and vanished, together with the alleged policeman.

"The Policeman with Wings," the newspapers called the mystery. It interested Mr. Roger Conway, who owned the Golden Eagle Hotel at St. Marychurch. Conway knew Betty and was interested in her, too. He took the story to Simon Templar, better known as the Saint, who scented excitement plus loot.

With Conway, he went down to Devonshire to talk to Betty, but another policeman had turned up and the girl had walked into the simple trap. Luckily for her, the Saint and Conway were not far away, and on a lonely road they rescued the alluring Betty and captured her captor.

Third degree methods made the captive talk. The man behind the trouble was "Spider" Sleat, newly out of gaol. The Saint guesses the truth. Sleat had buried his loot before being arrested, and Mr. Aldo's house had been built over the spot.

The Saint, in the guise of his prisoner, Dyson, calls on "Spider" Sleat in his hide-out. Betty goes with him.

THE light winked and went out. The voice spoke again.

"Why didn't you give the signal?"

"Why should I?" asked the Saint.

In the shadowy mass of the cottage an upright oblong of light was carved out abruptly. That was the door. Just inside a man was kindling an oil lamp. His back was turned to the Saint.

Simon straightened up and walked in. He set the girl down on her feet, and in three quick, smooth movements he took off his borrowed hat, turned down his collar,



and settled his coat. But the man was still busy with the lamp, and the shout came from behind the Saint—from outside the door.

"That's not Dyson!"

The man spun round with a smothered exclamation.

Simon, standing at his elegant ease, was lighting a second cigarette from the stump of his first.

"No, this isn't Dyson, dear heart," he murmured. "But, if you remember, I never said it was. I should like to maintain my reputation for truthfulness for a few minutes longer."

He looked up blandly and saw the men crowding in behind him. One—two—three—four—and two of them displaying automatics. Slightly bigger odds than the Saint had seriously expected. Simon Templar's face became extraordinarily mild.

"Well, well, well!" he drawled. "Look at all the flies, Spider—I congratulate you on the collection!"

The man by the lamp took a pace forward. The movement was queerly lopsided—the shuffling forward of one twisted foot, and the dragging of another twisted foot after it. Simon understood at once the origin of the nickname. The man was almost a dwarf, though tremendously broad of shoulder, with short, deformed legs and long, ape-like arms. In a small, wrinkled face, incredibly faded blue eyes blinked under shaggy eyebrows.

"One of these matinee idols we read about," thought the Saint in his mild way, and felt the girl's shoulder shudder against his.

The man took another slithering step

towards them, peering at them crookedly. Then:

"Who are you?" he asked in that harsh, cracked voice.

"His Royal Highness the Prince What's-it of I-forget-where," said the Saint. "And you're Mr. Sleat. Pleased to have you meet me. The introductions having been effected, do you curtsy first or do I? I'm afraid I hocked my table of precedence two seasons ago."

"And this—lady?"

"Miss Betty Aldo. I believe you wanted to see her, so I brought her along. The escort you provided was unfortunately—er—unable to continue the journey. I'm afraid he hit his head on a piece of wood or something. Anyway, the poor fellow was quite incapacitated, so I thought I'd better take his place."

The pale eyes stared back horribly.

"So you've met Dyson?"

"Slinky—I believe—is what his friends call him. But I call him Dismal Desmond. Yes, I think I can say that we—er—made contact."

Sleat looked round.

"Close that door!"

Simon saw the door shut and barred.

"Do you know," he said conversationally, "when I didn't know you so intimately as this, I used to call you Whiskers. And now I find you've shaved, it's terribly disappointing. However, to talk of pleasanter things—"

"Take them in here!"

"To talk of pleasanter things," continued the Saint affably, taking Betty's hand and following without protest into the room where the dwarf led the way with the lamp—"don't you find the air up here very bracing? And we've been having

WITH WINGS



By Leslie Charteris



A BRILLIANT,
INGENIOUS
STORY OF
SIMON TEMPLAR,
BETTER KNOWN
AS
"THE SAINT"

such lovely weather lately. My Auntie Ethel always used to say——"

Sleat turned with a snarl that bared a row of yellow teeth.

"That'll do for a minute——"

"But I'm not nearly satisfied yet," remarked Simon. "For instance, what are your favourite indoor sports? Halma, ludo, funny faces——"

Without the least warning, the dwarf reached up and struck him, flat-handed, across the mouth.

Once before in Simon's life a man had dared to do that. And this time, as before, for one blinding second Simon saw red.

There were two men covering him with automatics, and two men standing by with heavy sticks; but not even a battery of artillery and a land mine would have stopped the Saint in such a mood. His fist had leapt like a cannon-ball from his shoulder before he had consciously aimed the blow.

And the next second he was again as cool as ice, and the dwarf was picking himself off the floor with a trickle of blood running down from his smashed lips. Nobody else had moved.

"A distinct loss of temper," murmured the Saint regretfully, flicking the ash from his cigarette. "All the same, I shouldn't do that again if I were you, Beautiful—you might get hurt more next time. A joke's a joke, as Auntie Ethel used to say."

"You——"

"Hush!" said the Saint. "Not before the company. They might misunderstand you. And if you want to know why they didn't shoot me, the answer is that

they never had the nerve. Isn't that so, honeybunch?"

He swung round on one of the armed men, and without the least haste or heat flicked him under the nose. He saw the man's finger tighten on the trigger, and threw up his hands.

"One moment!" he rapped. "Hear my speech before you decide to shoot—or you may be sorry later. You, too, my pretty one!"

He turned to crack the warning at Sleat, whose right hand was sneaking down to his hip. There was a blaze of fury in the dwarf's eyes, and for a moment Simon thought he would shoot without waiting to listen. Simon stood quite still.

"Who are you?" rasped Sleat.

"I am Inspector Maxwell of Scotland Yard, and I've come to get y——"

Sleat's hand came up deliberately.

"——your views on the much-disputed question, Why was Bernard Shaw? . . . And, seriously, I'll advise you to be careful with that pop-gun, because my men are all round this house, and anyone who's going to get through that cordon will have to be thinner than a lath before breakfast. You can't laugh that off, Rudolph!"

"I've a good mind——"

"To shoot and chance the consequences. I know. But I shouldn't. I shouldn't, really. Because if you do, you'll quite certainly be hanged by the neck until you're so dead that it'll be practically impossible to distinguish you from a corpse. Not that a little more length in the neck wouldn't improve your beauty, but the way they do the stretching——"

One of the armed guard cut in savagely: "Dyson's squealed——"

"It was a good squeak," said the Saint meditatively, "as squeaks go. But the sweet pet had no choice. When we started to singe his second ear——"

"You're clever!" grated Sleat.

"Very!" agreed the Saint modestly. "My Auntie Ethel always said——"

The sentence merged into a thunderous pounding on the outer door, and the Saint broke off with a smile.

"My men are getting anxious about me. It's my fault, for getting so absorbed in this genial chit-chat. But tell me, Spider," said the Saint persuasively, "is this or is this not entitled to be called a cop?"

Sleat drew back a pace.

His eyes fled round the room, like the eyes of a hunted animal seeking an avenue of escape. And yet there was something about the eyes that was not surrendering. Pale, expressionless eyes in a mask-like, wrinkled face. Something about the eyes that told Simon, with a weird certainty, that it was not going to be called a cop.

The guard stood like statues. Or like three statues for the fourth was staring at Simon with a wild intentness.

Sleat's eyes came back to the Saint, palely, expressionlessly. It was an eerie effect, that sudden paling out of their blaze of fury into a blind, cold emptiness. Simon gripped the girl's arm to steady her, and felt her trembling.

"Don't look at me like that!" she mouthed sharply, shakily. "It's horrible!"

"Bear up, old dear," encouraged the Saint. "He can't help it. If you had a face like that——"

Again the thunder on the door.

And Sleat came to life. He motioned back the two armed men of the guard.

"Behind those curtains! You take the girl—you take the man. And if they try to give one word of warning—if you hear them say anything that might have a double meaning—you'll shoot! Understand?"

The men nodded dumbly, moving to obey. Sleat turned to the other two, indicating each in turn with a jerky, pointing finger.

"You stay here. You go and open the door. And you——"

He swung round on the Saint.

"You—you heard the orders I gave. They'll be carried out. So you'll dismiss your men on any excuse you can invent——"

"Shall I, dear angel?"

"You will—unless you want to die where you stand, and the girl with you. If you had been alone, I might have been afraid that your sense of duty might have outweighed your discretion. But you have a responsibility. I think you will be discreet. Now——"

The Saint heard the unbarring of the outer door, and the measured step of heavy feet. The curtains, three yards away from him reached to the floor. They had settled down, and there was nothing to betray the presence of the men behind them. The third man, standing in one corner, was still staring at him.

Sleat's hands, with the automatic, had gone behind him.

Then Roger Conway walked in and saluted, and Simon's face was terribly saintly.

"Yes, constable?"

"Beg pardon, sir," said Roger stiffly, "but your time's up. Sergeant Jones sent me in to see if you were all right."

"Quite all right, thanks," said the Saint. "As a matter of fact——"

And then, out of the tail of his eye, Simon saw a strange light dawn in the face of the third man, the man in the corner, the man who had been staring.

"Boss——"

Sleat craned round at the exclamation, with a malignant threat in his face that should have silenced the man. But the man was not silenced. He was pointing at the Saint with a shaking hand.

"Boss, dat ain't no bull! De foist time I see him was when he stuck up de Paradiso, back of Nassau Street, in Noo Yoik, four years back. Dat guy wid de goil's de Saint!"

Sleat spun back with his gun hand leaping into view, but the Saint's hands were high in the air.

"O.K., buddy!" he drawled. "You take the memory prize. Roger, take that hand away from your pocket. There's a whole firing squad got the drop on you at this moment, and they mightn't believe you were only going to produce your birth certificate. Boys and girls, you may take it from me. This is our night out!"

SENTENCED!

CONWAY saw the gun in Sleat's hand even as the Saint warned him, and his hands went up slowly as he moved over to join the Saint. Then the curtains moved, and the hidden men came out.

"So!" said Sleat harshly. "I thought you were a fraud from the first words you spoke. I've known a good many busies——"

"And you'll know a lot more before you're finished," said the Saint equably. "You've heard of me?"

"I have."

"Then you'll know I have—friends. Three of them are outside this house now. Unless you leave as my prisoners, you'll never pass them. They'll stalk you over the moor in the dark, and take you one by one. Not one of you will reach the road alive. Those were my orders. You can smile at that one, sonny boy!"

"Your men don't kill."

"They killed Chastel—you've heard of him? And there are others who've never been heard of. And for me they would kill you with as little compunction as they'd kill any other poisonous spider. If you don't believe me, send one of your men outside and see if he comes back."

It was bluff—blind, desperate bluff. But it was the only card Simon could find in his hand at that moment. At least, it gave him a few seconds' respite to think.

Sleat looked at him, his head on one side, as though seeking the first flaw in voice or manner. But the Saint stood as coldly solid as an iceberg, and his voice was as smooth and hard as polished steel.

"You think they'll obey your orders?" said Sleat.

"In anything."

The dwarf nodded.

"Then you'll give me a key to let myself out of your trap. It used to be said that the Saint was clever, but it seems that he also makes his mistakes. You will call them in here—please."

Simon laughed shortly.

"You have a hope!"

"Otherwise—— Fetch me a rope, Wells."

One of the men left the room.

"He's bluffing," said Roger tensely.

"Of course he is," murmured the Saint.

"But don't spoil his fun, if it amuses him. A plain man of simple amusements, our Whiskers. He reminds me of——"

"In a moment we shall see who's bluffing," said Sleat.

He turned as the man came back with a length of rope. Sleat took it and tied it in a short loop.

"Just now," he said, as he worked, "you spoke to me of a way of stretching necks. Personally, I prefer to compress them horizontally."

He tightened his knot carefully. The loop was just big enough to pass over a man's head. He passed it back to the man who had brought it.

"That rope, Wells, and the poker. You understand the principle of the garotte? You put the loop round the man's neck, put the poker through the loop, and twist so that the rope tightens slowly. Very slowly, you understand, Wells. No——"

He broke off, and a gleam of venomous ferocity came into his faded eyes.

"No," said Sleat. "I made a mistake. Not round the man's neck. Round the girl's."

Roger started forward, and instantly an armed man barred his way menacingly. Conway, helpless before the automatic that drove into his chest, raved like a maniac:

"You filthy scum——"

"My shout, Roger!"

The Saint's voice came very quietly. A stick of dynamite may also be quiet for a long time.

Simon was facing Sleat.

"I admit the argument. And the answer is—there's no one outside. That's the truth."

"I see—another bluff!"

"We don't get you, Funny Face."

"Was his face as funny as that before you hit him?" asked Roger insultingly.

"No," said the Saint. "Before that it was a tragedy."

Sleat stepped forward, his face con-

torted in a spasm of rage. The Saint thought for a second that Sleat was going to strike him again, and braced himself for the shock; but with a tremendous effort the man controlled himself.

"I could deal with your humour more comfortably, Templar," he said malevolently, "if you were tied up. Some more rope, Wells."

"Another of these brave men!" snapped Roger.

The Saint smiled. There had never been a time when the Saint could not smile.

"He's got a weak heart," said the Saint, "and his grandmother told him never to leave off his woollen drawers and never to risk the shock of being hit back. He forgot it just now, and he might have been killed. Wouldn't that have been dreadful?"

Then the man came back, this time with a great coil of rope over his arm. Two of the others seized the Saint.

"Search him," said Sleat, "and tie him up."

The Saint was searched, but he had no fear of that. He never carried such obvious things as firearms—only the two little knives which he could throw with such supernatural skill. And they were where only one who knew the secret would ever have dreamed of searching—Anna, his favourite, in a sheath strapped to his left forearm, and Belle, the second, in a similar sheath strapped to his right calf under his sock.

Then they brought up a chair, and he sat down willingly. To have struggled would have been simply a useless waste of energy. They bound his hands behind his back, and roped his ankles to the legs of the chair. Simon encouraged them.

"This is the twenty-seventh time I've been tied up like this," he said pleasantly, "and every time I've got away somehow. Just like the hero of numberless hectic adventures in a story-book. But don't let that depress you. Just try and do better than your predecessors. I'm afraid, though, your technique rather reminds me of the technique of the twenty-second man who did this. I called him Halfred the Hideous, and Auntie Ethel never took very kindly to him, either. He died, unhappily. I had to push him off the top of the house a few hours later. He fell into the orchard, and next season all the trees grew blood oranges."

The Saint's voice was as calm as if he had been discussing the following day's race-card, and as cheerfully optimistic as if he had been discussing it in the spirit of having collected a packet over a twenty-to-one winner that afternoon. He did it, as much as anything, to lighten the hearts of the others—and particularly the girl's. But he would probably have behaved in the same way, for his own entertainment, if he had been alone. The Saint never believed in getting all hot under the collar about anything. It was so bad for the smartness of the collar.

Sleat stood by the wall in silence, his automatic in his hand. His fury had settled down into something horribly soft and deadly, like gently simmering vitriol. To anyone less reckless than the Saint, that sudden restraint might have been more paralysing to the tongue than any show of violence. Even Simon felt a chilly tingle slide up his spine like the touch of a clammy hand, and smiled more seraphically than ever.

Sleat spoke:

"Now the other man."

"Roger——"

The girl's control broke for an instant, in that involuntary cry. Conway, forced into a chair like the Saint, with the men

rapidly pinioning his arms and legs, answered her urgently:

"Don't worry, darling. These blistered rats can't do anything I care about. And when I get near that mis-shapen blot on the landscape, over by that wall, I'll—"

"You shall have the job of killing him, Roger," said the Saint dispassionately. "I promise you that. And I should recommend a sharply pointed barge-pole. You wouldn't want to touch the skunk with anything shorter."

The girl stifled a sob. She was white and shaking.

"But what are they going to do?"

"Nothing," said Roger brusquely.

Sleat put his automatic away in his pocket.

"Now the girl," he said.

Roger strained at his bonds in agony.

"You're even afraid of her, are you?" he blazed. "That's sensible of you! New-born babes would be about your fighting mark, you white-livered—"

"Why get excited, son?" Simon's voice drawled in. "You'll only scare the girl. Whereas there's really nothing—"

"All right, boss."

Wells spoke. The roping was finished.

Sleat moved twistedly off the wall.

"Pale blue eyes," thought the Saint.

"Pale blue eyes. All ruthless men—murderers and great generals—have them. This is our evening!"

And Sleat picked up his loop of rope from the floor where it had fallen, and shuffled forward again.

He halted in front of the Saint.

"You are the professional humorist of the party, I believe, Templar?" he said, and his cracked voice was high-pitched and uneven.

Simon looked him steadily in the eyes.

"Quite right," he said. "At least, that's my reputation. And you're the monstrosity from the touring menagerie, aren't you? Let me know when you're ready to start your turn."

Then he saw what was going to happen, and his voice ripped out again in a desperate command.

"Don't look, Betty! Whiskers is going to make one of his funny faces, and you might die laughing!"

"I dislike your kind of humour," said Sleat in the same tone as before, and swung the loose end of the rope.

The girl screamed once, and closed her eyes.

Roger swore foully, impotently.

Sleat babbled:

"That—and that—and that—and that—and that!" He paused, panting. "And if you've any more humorous remarks to make, Templar—"

"Only," said the Saint, with nothing but the least tremor in his voice, "that my Auntie Ethel had a very good joke about an incorrigible bimetalist of Salt Lake City whose hobby was collecting freaks. He was quite happy until one day he noticed that all pigs had short, curly tails. He went quite mad, and wore himself to a shadow touring all the pig-farms in the States looking for a pig with a long, straight tail. For all I know, he's searching still, and it occurred to me that perhaps your tail—"

Sleat, with the face of a fiend, lifted his rope's end again.

"Then you can add that—and that—"

It was Roger who interrupted with an unprintable profanity which, for some reason, found its mark.

The dwarf turned on him.

"Another humorist?" he sneered. "Then—"

He struck once, twice—

"You fool!" sobbed the girl hysterically.

"That won't help you! There aren't any men outside, I tell you—"

Sleat paused with his hand raised again—and slowly lowered it. And as slowly as that slow movement, the flush of madness froze under the surface of his face, leaving it grey and twitching.

"There aren't any men outside," he muttered. "That's what I wanted to be sure about, in case he was trying to make me walk out into a trap. But there aren't any men outside—"

He dropped the rope.

"Oh, Roger—Saint—"

The girl was sobbing weakly in her chair.

Conway called to her insistently:

"Don't cry, dear—don't cry, please! It'll only make that walking ulcer think he's won. I'm not hurt. Don't cry!"

"You beasts—you beasts!"

Sleat shambled over to her and tilted back her head brutally.

"How did they come here?" he demanded.



At the very moment the bag of diamonds was lifted from the hole, a gaunt figure loomed in the shadows. It was Inspector Teal.

"In a car—it's by the road—and your man's in it—"

"You little fool!" broke in the Saint's bitter voice. "You're smashing the game to glory! Why don't you go down on your knees and beg the scab to spare us? That'd finish it splendidly!"

Sleat turned.

"Unless you want some more rope, Templar—"

"Thanks!" said the Saint clearly, with his head held high and the blood running down to stain his collar. "That hurts me a lot less than the thought of all the clean mud you must have soiled by crawling through it!"

The dwarf lifted his hand; and then he mastered himself.

"I know all I want to know," he said.

"And I have things to attend to at once."

"Disposing of the body of Sebastian Aldo, for instance?" suggested the Saint insolently.

"Yes—I shall do that at the same time as I dispose of yours."

"So he's dead?" said Roger.

"He died of heart failure."

"When he saw you, I suppose?"

The girl said:

"You cowards! You murdered him—"

"I said he died of heart failure!" snarled the dwarf. "Why should I trouble to lie, when none of you will ever be able to use anything I tell you? The shock killed him."

"That is sufficient for me," said the Saint. "For that alone I shall be justified in ordering your execution. And the sentence will be carried out!"

Sleat shook his head. His eyes shifted over to the Saint, and a slow, malevolent leer came into his wrinkled face.

"You will order nothing," he said.

Only the dim yellow light of the oil lamp on the table illuminated that macabre scene. The four guards stood motionless around the walls. Simon, Roger and Betty, in their chairs, were ranged in a rough crescent. In the centre of the room stood Sleat, with a queer light flickering in his pale eyes, and his face twisted and ghoulish.

There was a moment's silence.

Don't miss this tense moment in next week's instalment.

Conway sat grimly still. His face was white, save for two thick red weals that ran across either cheek, and behind his eyes burned a dull fire. He looked at the Saint, and saw the Saint's head thrown back with its old unconquerable mocking arrogance, and the Saint's face bruised and bloody. He looked at the girl, and met her eyes. Her quick breathing was then the only sound in that moment's silence.

"I warn you," said the Saint clearly, "that whatever you do—whether you fly to the end of the world, or hide yourself at the bottom of the sea—my friends will follow you and find you! And you will die!"

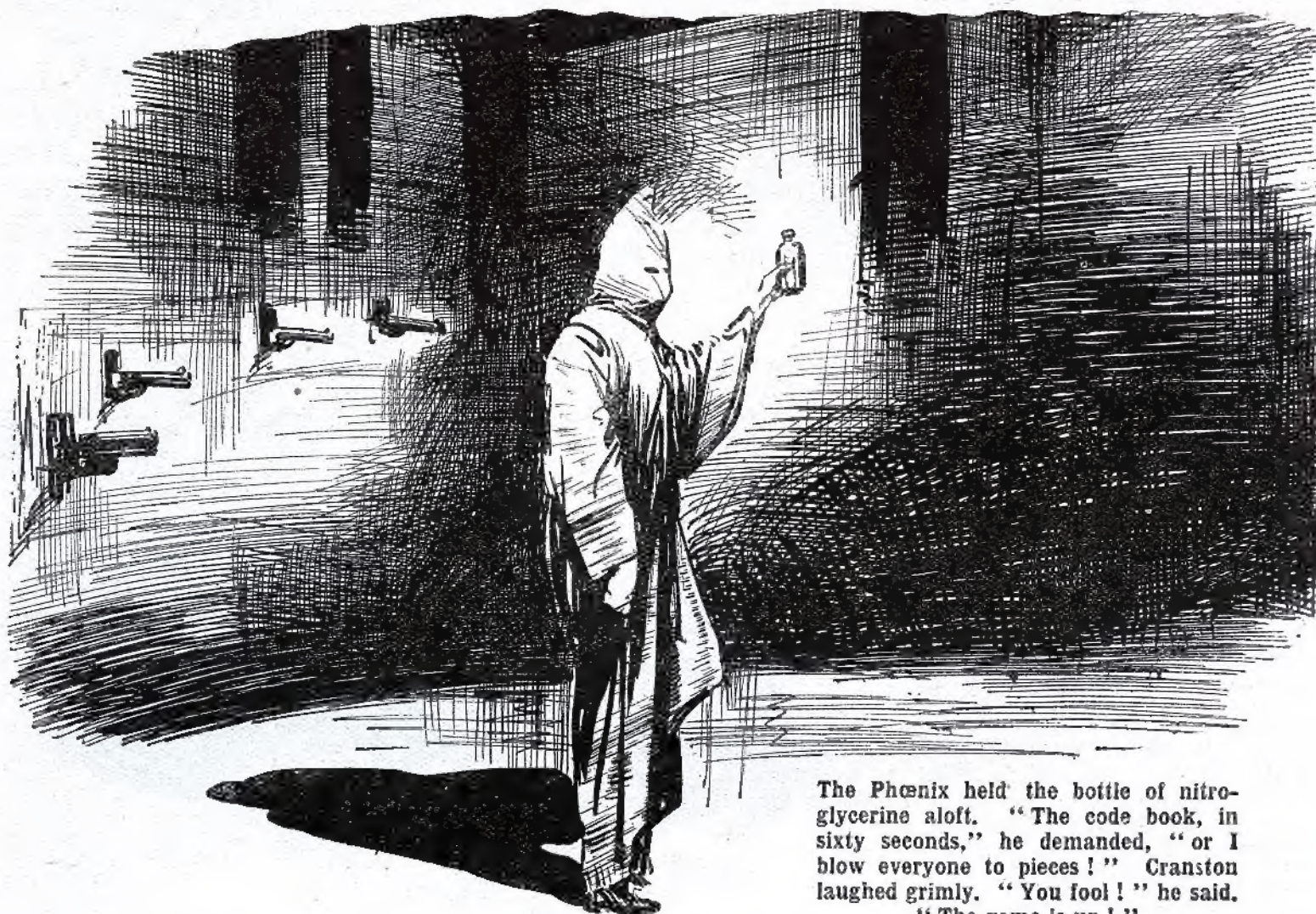
Again Sleat shook his head. It was like the wagging of the head of a grotesque doll.

"You will order nothing," he repeated. "Because you—and these two friends of yours—will die—to-night!"

A window rattled in the wind, and the flame of the lamp flickered out like a tired soul.

(Don't miss the amazing climax in next week's long instalment of this enthralling story.)

MAN TRAP



The Phoenix held the bottle of nitro-glycerine aloft. "The code book, in sixty seconds," he demanded, "or I blow everyone to pieces!" Cranston laughed grimly. "You fool!" he said. "The game is up!"

Chapter 1. BLACKMAIL.

A MAN was walking slowly along the Marylebone Road. The morning sunlight was not very strong, yet this furtive little man kept his hat brim turned down as though to protect weak eyes from the slanting sunshine.

His eyes were neither weak nor near-sighted. On the contrary, they blazed with a ruthless light. He knew he was about to do something that would place his life in terrific peril. But his avarice and the itching desire for two thousand pounds was stronger than his fear. He intended to plunge into a game of crime in which, he was convinced, he held all the aces.

His name was Leo Barry, and he was not altogether unknown to the police, and others who were intimately connected with the underworld of London—a fact which rendered his destination unusually interesting.

Midway down a side street was a house owned by the most notorious racecourse crook in the country—Duke Duncan.

Duncan lived there openly, sneeringly. He had thought it a great joke to house himself and his henchmen in such a spot. He had purchased the property through

agents. He owned it, legally, paid his taxes promptly—and laughed at the police.

Well known criminals, mainly toughs and gunmen, conferred there with Duke Duncan and his lieutenant, Snap Carlo. A staff of shrewd solicitors looked after the legal side of Duke's rackets.

It was this powerful figure of crime whom Leo Barry was planning to visit. He was going to force a private interview for himself. More daring than that, he was going to blackmail Duke Duncan to the tune of two thousand pounds!

There was a laurel bush at the gate of Duncan's big house. Leo Barry crouched warily as he passed it. With a quick flick of his hand, he drew a gun out of a shoulder holster and dropped the weapon into the heart of the bush.

He breathed a shuddering sigh as he walked unarmed up the steps to Duke's front door. He was taking desperate chances, but to make his impudent blackmail demand with a gun on him would have been absolute suicide.

His jaw clenched stubbornly as he thought about the document in his inside pocket. He rang the bell.

The door was opened by a burly butler. The servant said nothing at all. He merely closed the door behind the caller

and preceded him along a magnificently furnished passage.

At one side of the hall, Leo could see a billiard room through an open door. Half a dozen well-dressed men were knocking the polished balls about. None of them took the trouble to glance up as Leo passed the doorway.

But there was one other man who did. He was seated on a chair near the foot of the stairs. At his elbow was a small table on which rested a telephone.

Leo recognised him instantly. He was Snap Carlo, Duke Duncan's lieutenant.

Snap came forward so noiselessly that he seemed to float on the balls of his feet.

"I don't know you!" he challenged. "What's your name?"

"Leo Barry."

"Want to see somebody?"

"Yes. Duke Duncan."

Snap grinned, viciously. His free hand took ten seconds to make sure that Barry was unarmed.

"Got an appointment?" he asked.

"No."

"Then get out!"

Leo Barry's face was very pale, but he stood his ground.

"You'd better tell Duke Duncan I'm here," he muttered. "Tell him I want to

The trap was cunning, The SHADOW walked into it, and that was the end—not of The SHADOW, but of his ruthless foe—The Phoenix!



A POWERFUL, LONG COMPLETE SHADOW STORY

By
**MAXWELL
GRANT**

talk to him personally. It's about a murder job—the one for which they're going to hang a bloke named Jack Skelly."

Snap's face was suddenly like a cold slab of stone. He stood motionless for a breathless second. Then he turned and went back to the table with the telephone.

His voice rustled over the wire. When he hung up there was almost a trace of humour in the rasp of his voice.

"You don't die yet, mate. Up those stairs—and walk ahead of me!"

Barry ascended slowly, his feet making no sound on the rich carpet.

The private office of Duke Duncan was flooded with harsh, blinding light that fell full on Barry's face and made him blink. Snap remained at Barry's side. A knife appeared in his swarthy fingers. Snap rather fancied himself with cold steel. He was not a stabber, but a thrower.

Barry took a bulky envelope from his pocket. He laid it on the desk in front of Duke Duncan. He knew that a single false move, a wrong intonation in his voice would doom him to instant death at the hands of the two grim-faced gunmen who stood by the door.

Coolly he accused Duke of committing the murder for which a young man named Jack Skelly was now awaiting death by hanging. The proof of it was in the type-written document lying on the polished desk. The original of those photostated pages was in a bank vault, where Barry had secreted it under an assumed name. The price for the copy and the original was two thousand, payable at once. In cash!

"Blackmail, eh?" Duncan breathed. "D'you think you can get away with it?" "I think so," said Barry shakily. "Or I wouldn't have been stupid enough to come here."

He watched Duncan reading the type-written pages. Duke chuckled suddenly. He laid down the sheets of paper.

"Looks as though you've got the goods on me," he said. "You're a smart fellow,

Barry. What's your price for the original evidence in your bank vault?"

"Two thousand," Leo said huskily. He had thought over the price during that last tense week of nerving himself. Not too much to enrage Duncan, and not too small to make him suspicious.

"Right. It's a deal. I'll buy!"

Snap Carlo stared open-mouthed at his chief. But Duke apparently did not notice his anger or disgust. He pulled open the drawer of a filing cabinet and lifted out a thick roll of bank-notes tied with a heavy rubber band. Every one of the bank-notes was a crisp hundred pound note. He stripped off twenty and pushed them across to Barry.

"Tony—Rocco—you two go with this fellow to the bank. Make sure he doesn't hand you blank paper. Open the envelope when you get him outside the bank."

He held up the page in strong, steady fingers.

"If it's exactly like this, let him go free—and bring the envelope back here."

The pair nodded. But their gaze flicked questioning towards Snap Carlo. Snap's face was white with fury.

"What's the idea, Duke? You going soft or something? Don't you know that if you knuckle down to a cheap crook like this—"

"I know a lot!" Duke said in a queer drawing voice.

He got up from his desk and walked leisurely towards his henchman. There was disloyalty in Snap's swarthy face, murder in the rigid manner in which he gripped his knife. But Duke's open palm swept swiftly above the arm and knife, struck Carlo a stinging slap in the face.

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it! In the meantime, do as you're told!"

The mark of Duke's palm made a crimson splotch on Snap's skin.

The two gunmen slipped in on either side of Leo Barry. They walked him from the room and the door closed behind them.

Duke grinned at Snap. His tone was entirely friendly, as if nothing had happened between them.

"Look at that blackmail evidence," he said. "Maybe you'll see why I think it's cheap at two thousand pounds."

Snap Carlo read it swiftly. The document riveted the guilt of murder on Duke Duncan. It exonerated completely the young scapegoat, Jack Skelly, whom Duke had framed. Skelly was now awaiting death by hanging.

The police and the newspapers were convinced of Skelly's guilt. The real truth was known only to Duke's gang—and the clever blackmailer, Leo Barry.

"I still think it would have been safer to kill Barry," Snap muttered.

"I don't! What I'm after is that original document in his bank vault. When I get the original I'll have something worth at least a quarter of a million pounds."

Duke's heavy forefinger pointed to a paragraph on the last page.

"Read that again—slowly. Notice the name of a man called John Marsley?"

"Yes, but I don't see—"

Snap Carlo was suddenly excited. The innocent paragraph over which he had skipped in the first reading took on a grim importance. It linked John Marsley with a killer named "Spud" White, and placed both at the scene of the crime for which the unfortunate Jack Skelly was now awaiting execution.

Snap realised now that the document Duke had just purchased doomed John Marsley to the gallows—unless he was willing to buy his safety from Duke Duncan. Leo Barry had apparently failed to realise the significance of that innocently worded paragraph. He had sold for two thousand pounds something that in the hands of a resolute criminal would be worth a quarter of a million!

For John Marsley was a multi-millionaire banker. He controlled steamship

lines, railways, industries. He was a leader in finance and politics.

And Duke Duncan had the evidence to hang him for murder!

"You should have hit me harder than you did," Snap Carlo grinned. "I missed that completely. From now on, I'm taking orders and liking it!"

His flattery blended with Duke's complacent chuckle. But his hand rubbed instinctively at the cheek where Duke had struck him. But Snap didn't utter any of the ugly thoughts that seethed behind his smiling eyes. He was thinking of a crooked multi-millionaire named John Marsley and a chance at a fortune.

Snap had plans of his own!

CRANSTON BUYS A GARDENIA.

LAMONT CRANSTON was purchasing a gardenia to place in his lapel. He stood close to the window of the florist shop, to satisfy himself that the flower looked well enough in the bright morning sunlight.

The shop assistant stood discreetly in the background. For that reason, he was completely unaware of the scrutiny that Cranston was giving a certain house a few doors away on the opposite side of the street.

Cranston's interest in Duke Duncan's headquarters was born of a shrewd knowledge of crime and criminals.

For Lamont Cranston was the Shadow, crime-fighter extraordinary! Mysterious being of blackness, his very name struck terror to the underworld.

Lamont Cranston had been driving slowly along the Marylebone Road when he had noticed the furtive figure of Leo Barry. That much was coincidence. The rest was a product of exact knowledge.

Cranston knew Barry was a slippery and successful crook who specialised in blackmail. He watched him turn the corner into the side street. He saw him hide his gun in the laurel bush at the gate of Duke Duncan's house. He watched him enter.

Barry's queer behaviour interested Cranston. It seemed incredible that any one—even a desperate crook—should have the nerve to try to blackmail a killer like Duncan in his own guarded headquarters. Yet there was no other explanation.

Cranston tried three gardenias before he was satisfied. Before he paid for his purchase, Leo Barry emerged from Duncan's house.

Barry was grinning triumphantly. Two men walked with him. They were the two henchmen, Tony and Rocco, who had been ordered to accompany the smart little blackmailer to the bank. The trio walked calmly onward to the corner and disappeared.

Lamont Cranston followed. He used the fast little car he had parked at the kerb. It was a dangerous type of tailing, but the Shadow's car could be throttled down almost to a crawl. And the trio ahead of him hurried along with brisk strides. The Shadow's surveillance went unnoticed.

The goal of the guemen was the stone portals of the Greater London Bank. Leo Barry went in alone. Rocco and Tony waited outside.

But not Lamont Cranston. He had left his car a block away. He walked calmly into the bank, almost on the heels of Barry. The little blackmailer went to the rear, to the safe-deposit strong-room.

Cranston drifted across to a table and pretended to fill out a deposit slip. He was able to see Barry over the slant of his arm. The blackmailer had already emerged from the strong-room with a tin box. He opened it and withdrew a bulky

envelope. Then he returned the box to the attendant and started forward.

He was terribly nervous. In stowing away the envelope in his pocket, he dropped a roll of bank-notes to the floor. One of them was visible as Leo clutched at it. It was a hundred pound denomination!

Cranston's eyes grew grimmer. He was aware of Duke Duncan's weakness for hundred pound bank-notes. It was added proof that blackmail money had been passed to Barry, and that the envelope contained information of tremendous value to the biggest racketeer in the country.

Through the bank window Cranston saw Barry rejoin Tony and Rocco. They slid in on either side of their captive and the envelope changed hands.

Tony tore open one end and examined the contents. He and Rocco were apparently satisfied. They allowed Barry to walk alone to the corner and hail a taxi. They themselves turned and retraced their steps towards the Marylebone Road.

Cranston slid swiftly into his parked car. But this time he didn't follow the two gunmen. He sped ahead of them. He knew exactly the route they would take to return to their grim employer. He had a daring plan in mind. He intended to

NEXT WEEK
**"BIG SHOTS
AT WAR"**
An Enthralling
Under-Cover Story
By Walter Edwards
(See page 298 for full details.)

intercept them and read the contents of that mysterious envelope.

The swift little car halted near a garage not far from the street where Duncan lived.

The garage was empty. It was due soon to be pulled down to make room for improvements. Its doors were locked. Skeleton keys took care of that. Cranston peered inside, made sure that there was no caretaker in sight. Then he closed the door gently, from the outside.

By the time Rocco and Tony appeared along the pavement Lamont Cranston was pleasantly drunk. It would have taken an experienced eye to detect that his drunkenness was a sham. Tony and Rocco grinned as they saw him.

Cranston beckoned to them. He was clutching at his pocket for a visiting card. As he drew it out, he dropped his wallet on to the pavement and a wad of pound notes became visible. He picked up the money with drunken fingers and shoved it carelessly into his pocket.

Rocco glanced at Tony. Tony nodded. Dough was dough to these two worthies—and a sap was a sap! They felt even surer of it when they heard Cranston's drunken request. He was seeking an address. The address scrawled on the visiting card was the garage itself!

"We'll take care of you," Tony breathed. Rocco grunted, his eyes veering for an instant over his shoulder.

They tried the door of the garage. It opened readily. A gift!

Rocco attempted to hold on to Cranston as they entered the dark interior. But with drunken petulance, Cranston wriggled out of his grasp.

"Where is he?" Tony snarled. "Don't let him get away!"

"It's O.K.," Rocco rejoined. "He's blotto! Wait till I find the light switch."

A click sounded. An overhead light filled the garage with brilliance. But a quick gasp of rage issued from the lips of the two gunmen. Their intoxicated victim was gone. He had vanished completely.

An instant later Rocco gave a cautious exclamation. His stubby finger pointed. Across the bare floor of the deserted garage was a small boxed-in office.

They both darted towards the office, threw open the door. Instantly they yelled with surprise and fear. They shrank back from an awesome figure that emerged to confront them.

A black robe covered the tall figure from head to foot. The brim of a slouch hat screened burning eyes that seemed to writhe with a piercing flame. Black-gloved hands held twin automatics. Sibilant laughter made a whispering sound above the black muzzles.

"The Shadow!" Tony gasped.

Not for an instant did he or Rocco dream that the figure who confronted them was the drunken gentleman they had lured into the garage. Cranston was apparently lying somewhere on the office floor in a stupor.

The voice of the Shadow issued a grim order. Rocco and Tony raised their arms. In Tony's uplifted left hand was the envelope he had taken from Leo Barry. He had drawn it from his pocket at the order of the Shadow. Cursing, he opened the envelope and held the papers wide so that the Shadow could read the contents over the steady barrels of his guns.

The keen eyes of Lamont Cranston read every word of the blackmail evidence. It was impressed indelibly upon his memory. Again the sibilant laughter of the Shadow made rustling echoes in the garage.

His right hand suddenly jerked an automatic. A bullet shattered the light and plunged the garage into utter darkness. The two gunmen pulled out their own guns, but they had no target at which to aim.

The grating of a window sash at the rear of the building told them that the Shadow had gone, and they decided to leave there themselves, in a hurry. But it took some moments before they could locate the door and smash the lock, and any minute the cops might arrive. It was with great relief that they hastened away to safety.

They were two frightened crooks who scurried along the streets while the police whistles shrilled. Cranston's shot had raised the alarm.

The envelope that Tony had received from Leo Barry was still in their possession. It was the only reassuring thing about the whole mess.

Both crooks knew the grim treatment they would get if Duke Duncan suspected the truth. They dared not admit to him that they allowed the Shadow to intercept the blackmail evidence and read it.

They decided to conceal what had happened between the bank and gang headquarters. They would merely hand the evidence to Duke and tell him everything had worked out well.

This was exactly what Cranston had foreseen. His grim laughter issued from

a trim little car that sped innocently away from the scene.

The name of a wealthy and socially prominent international banker made a vivid glow in the mind of Lamont Cranston. Like Duke Duncan before him, he realised instantly the value of the evidence that linked John Marsley with murder.

A FORTUNE IN CASH

JOHN MARSLEY was nervous. The enormous private office in which he sat had been designed for comfort and convenience. Yet John Marsley was far from happy. The hand that toyed with a pencil quivered. He rose from his ornate chair and began to pace up and down the room.

Two objects in his office seemed to engage his attention. One was an electric clock, the other was a calendar. His gaze kept moving from one to the other, as his restless feet carried him up and down the length of his priceless imported rug.

In thirty-seven days a young man named Jack Skelly was doomed to be put to death for a murder he had never committed. Marsley could save his life by picking up one of his telephones and speaking a dozen words to the Home Secretary. Yet he had no intention of doing so.

He muttered harshly to himself, as he halted opposite the clock. The hands pointed to seven minutes to ten. It was exactly twenty-four hours since Leo Barry had blackmailed Duke Duncan.

John Marsley shivered. He expected a visitor. Duke Duncan himself was about to pay a business call. The thought made him grind his teeth with rage. A sudden knock at the door changed his expression. He forced a smile on his hard lips.

"Come in," he said gently.

A very pretty girl came into the room, accompanied by a good-looking young man. She darted across to Marsley, kissed him with mock anger, rumbled his hair. Under cover of the confusion, he managed to get a grip on himself. He held out a friendly hand to his daughter's companion.

"How are you, Mr. West? Glad to see you! Golf to-day, eh? Lucky man!"

"That's what we dropped in to see you about," Stanley West grinned. "We're going to play a round on the Fairlawn links in Surrey. Viola had a happy idea that perhaps you might join us—"

Viola Marsley chimed in impulsively: "Come on, dad! Be a sport!—Play eighteen holes with us. The links are right behind that cottage you've rented." Marsley shook his head.

"Sorry," he said. "Some other time. To-day, I'm quite busy."

Viola pouted, but her father had little trouble getting rid of his daughter and her companion. He escorted them to the door and gave Viola a brief kiss. He held Stanley West's hand a shade longer than was necessary.

This young man puzzled the banker. West had plenty of money, and moved with ease in the best circles. Yet Marsley had a definite feeling of peril the first time he had laid eyes on him. He couldn't exactly tell why.

He never mentioned this feeling to his daughter. Viola was quite fond of Stanley West. There was danger she might unconsciously warn West that her father mistrusted him. And Marsley preferred not to put West on his guard—not yet, at any rate.

He watched his daughter and her escort

until they vanished from the outer office into the corridor.

He told Hoskin, his secretary, with a grim snap to his voice:

"I'm expecting another visitor. When he arrives, show him in at once!"

Meanwhile, Viola Marsley and Stanley West had descended to the hall of the big building. Viola was laughing at a joking remark West had made. He was witty, as well as handsome. He laughed with her, but his eyes were alert. Viola's friendship with him had ripened rapidly, but he was eager to go farther than that.

He was desperately anxious for Viola to fall in love with him. When that happened he'd be ready to make his first move against her father. He had waited patiently. Now he was almost ready.

So closely did he watch Viola that he was entirely unaware of another pair of eyes near the door. Lamont Cranston was loitering there, apparently scanning a morning paper.



Cranston was in time to see a girl clambering through the open window.

Cranston drifted towards the street and saw the laughing couple get into a superb cream-coloured car and drive off.

A few moments before Viola and Stanley West had appeared from upstairs, a more interesting figure had gone up in a lift in an adjoining shaft. The man was Duke Duncan. Cranston was not surprised. He had expected this visit.

He pretended to examine the list of tenants on the wall. He glanced at his tiny wristwatch. The hands pointed exactly to ten o'clock.

The electric clock in Marsley's private office also pointed to ten, as Duke Duncan was announced.

The millionaire and Duke Duncan, the racecourse crook, eyed each other warily.

Duncan wasted no time getting to the point of his visit. His voice was crisp. After a brisk interchange of low-toned words, Duke tossed an envelope on the banker's desk.

"That's the photostat copy. I've got the original. Read it!"

Marsley studied it word by word, sentence by sentence. His face was haggard when he finished.

"How much?" he whispered.

"Two hundred and fifty thousand! Cash! Delivered to me by yourself in person. Alone. At midnight to-night."

There was an ugly pause. Marsley eyed the drawer of his desk, where a loaded gun with the safety catch off lay within reach of his muscular hand. But he made no move to snatch for the weapon.

"You know well I dare not say no," Marsley grated. Every bit of colour had faded from his cheeks. "I'll pay, and I'll pay to-night. But I reserve the right to dictate the terms of the transfer."

Duncan scowled.

"For instance?"

"An even exchange of the document and the money. No witnesses. I come alone to the rendezvous. So do you."

"O.K."

"And the place of the transfer must be picked by me. I dare not take the slightest risk of discovery."

"If I say yes, where will it be?"

"In a cottage I own in Surrey. It's situated on a lonely lane that runs past the eleventh hole of the Fairlawn golf links."

Duncan nodded.

"Very well. And it'll be bad for you if you try to doublecross me!"

"And Heaven help you," Marsley said in a husky undertone, "if you try to hold back that blackmail evidence after I've given you the money!"

When the racketeer had left, Marsley glanced at the calendar. He was still staring at it when his secretary, Hoskin, entered in response to a ring.

"I want two hundred and fifty thousand pounds made available for me before the bank closes this afternoon. In cash, do you understand?"

"Cash, sir?"

"You heard me." His purring words were like velvet.

Left alone again, Marsley dictated a cablegram in code over the 'phone to be sent to one of his banking representatives in the Far East. The message seemed to reassure him. His face hardened.

He took his pistol out of the drawer of the desk and examined it carefully with eyes like flint.

SMART BLONDE.

LAMONT CRANSTON observed Duke Duncan emerge from the building, to be joined by Snap Carlo.

Cranston instantly threw his gardenia into the gutter. He turned lazily on his heel and walked away. Almost before he had vanished, a taxi slid slowly along the kerb towards the spot where Cranston had been standing.

"Taxi, sir?"

"Yes," Duke grunted.

The two crooks entered the taxi. They had a little trouble giving the address to the driver. He was quite deaf. From his left ear a tiny wire descended along his lapel to the pocket of his coat. The driver tapped his deaf ear apologetically. The cab shot away from the kerb.

The driver of this cab was the shrewdest taxi-man in London. His name was Moe

To My Readers

SLIM KLINE was a name that meant something in the underworld of both America and Europe. It was said, in the States, that the "pen" that could hold Slim Kline had yet to be built, and it was on police records that he'd smashed his way out of Leavenworth, Sing Sing, Snake River, and other gaols.

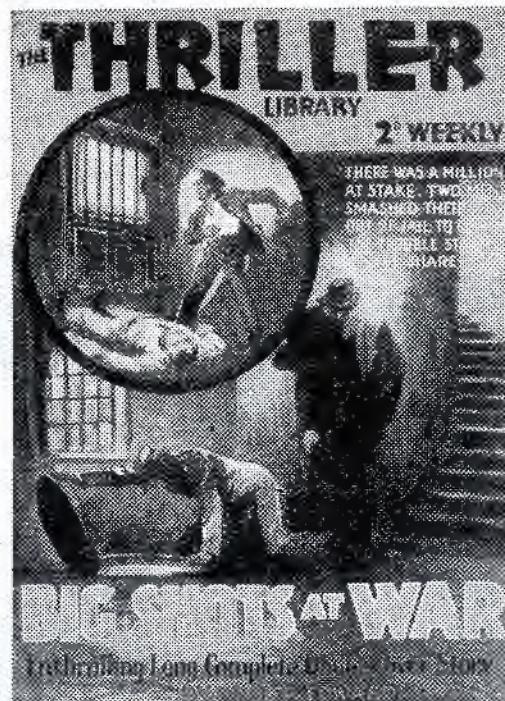
He never worked with a gang. He was a lone wolf, reputed to have tackled every crime in the calendar. But no man can keep going for ever. The States became too hot for him and he vanished. When next he came into the news he was in England—arrested, on the first job he tried to pull.

That was how he arrived at Bleakmoor. The Governor warned him that if he tried any funny stuff he'd be for it. Slim grinned and started trouble there and then, and all the "solitaries" in the world couldn't damp his ardour. He was tough. He could take it and come back for more. The old lags respected him. Even Holy Joe Deacon grew chummy.

But Joe had a motive. He was

"in" for pinching a rare collection of diamonds. The cops had got him, but they had not got the "rocks." Joe was anxious to make a break and collect his loot. The only man likely to help him was Slim Kline.

And Kline did it, as only Kline could. They fooled the cops. Holy Joe promised to split fifty-fifty, but when the moment came he changed



his mind. It was the worst thing he could have done, for, from that moment, it was war between him and Slim Kline—a battle of wits. It was a rare dust they raised, and somewhere in the fog of it all was Mr. X, the smartest under-cover man Scotland Yard has ever known.

Read next week's enthralling, long complete story, "BIG SHOTS AT WAR," by Walter Edwards, to see what happened. Did Kline get his split? Did Holy Joe get away with all the loot? Did Mr. X get his man?

Well, what do you think? The answer will be in next week's long story, and it's one of the most thrilling and entertaining yarns you'll come across in a long time. Don't miss it.

And don't miss the amazing climax of the Saint story in the same issue. You had better order your copy of next week's THRILLER Library as soon as possible.

The Editor

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to: "The Thriller" Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

MAN TRAP

(Continued from previous page.)

Shrevnitz. It didn't mean anything to either Duke or Snap. But it held plenty of meaning for Lamont Cranston. Moe Shrevnitz was one of the Shadow's trusted agents.

Moe had been waiting patiently to receive that gardenia signal. He knew that the address he had been given was the hotel where a blackmailer named Leo Barry was staying under another name.

Moe was, of course, far from deaf. The wire that descended from his ear to his pocket was a dictaphone connection. The plug in his ear was a tiny listening device.

The wire passed under Moe's coat-tail, through the upholstery of the front seat and backward under the floor covering of the cab, to a microphone that picked up the slightest sound.

"Do you think Marsley will come through with the dough?" Snap whispered. "A cinch!"

They both chuckled.

Details of the blackmail arrangements between Marsley and Duncan became evident to Moe Shrevnitz. He learned that a fortune in cash was to be passed at midnight, in exchange for evidence that threatened Marsley's security. He became aware of the lonely cottage owned by the millionaire opposite the Fairlawn golf course in Surrey.

"Ain't I driving out with you?" Snap asked.

"No. I want you to check up on this Leo Barry. I'll drop you at the corner nearest his hotel. I'm puzzled about that

fellow. Barry may be wiser than we think. He's disappeared since he got his two thousand from me. He may be up to something.

"Stick around the hotel and if Barry shows I want you to trail him and find out where he goes and who he meets. I'll see you at twelve to-night in front of Marsley's cottage out at Fairlawn. I've written the directions down on this sheet of paper. Keep it."

The paper passed between them and was stowed out of sight in Snap's pocket. A moment later Duke ordered the taxi to stop.

Snap got out; Duke gave Moe Shrevnitz a second address—this time his own headquarters. The cab shot obediently away.

Snap walked into a shop and bought cigarettes. In doing so, he failed to realise a very important fact: another taxi had been cleverly trailing the one driven by Moe.

A girl alighted, paid her fare. Then she walked slowly towards the door of the tobacconist's shop.

She was a blonde, and very pretty. Her figure was flawless, her mouth a provocative scarlet. She looked as if she might be a girl out for fun and amusement at someone else's expense. That was exactly the impression she hoped to convey to Snap Carlo.

As Snap came out of the shop she stepped forward so quickly that she bumped awkwardly into him, knocking the cigarettes out of his hand.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry! Please excuse me!"

He put out his hand to save her. She stood close to him, her soft body pressed lightly against his. Nor did she withdraw. Snap drew a deep breath through his nostrils. A little wisp of scented hair

brushed his cheek. He looked into her eyes, and his mortal soul sank into their depths.

He was caught—hook, line and sinker! "That's all right. Hope I didn't hurt you, miss. I'd hate to harm anyone as good-looking as you."

Her blue eyes seemed to caress him. "You're not so bad looking yourself."

"How about a little drink?"

"Now you're talking!"

"I'll bet you're an actress?"

She laughed gaily.

"Thanks for the compliment. I'm really just a secretary. My name is Alice Dodge. I work for a rich lady named Viola Marsley."

Snap Carlo's eyes blinked. Here was a stroke of luck—a chance to get a new line on the banker and his daughter through this gay secretary, who looked as if she was probably indiscreet, to say the least. And a chance to have a little fun with the blonde herself.

Snap forgot his usual caution. He consented to have a drink with Alice Dodge in her flat close by. She said she lived there with a girl friend, but Snap never saw that individual.

They had one drink. Then another. Snap's arm slid around Alice's pliant waist and he kissed her. Then the girl eluded his clutch. She skipped across the room and turned on the wireless. Swing music filled the room.

"Pour another drink," she murmured. "Then we'll dance. Excuse me a moment. I'll change into something more suitable."

Alice Dodge gave him a warm smile and disappeared into her bed-room.

But the moment the door closed behind her, her whole attitude changed. She became at once cold, grim, alert. She pulled off her dress with a swift gesture.

From a closet she took a gown—a daringly low-cut garment that revealed the curves of her figure in a candid way that made her blush with embarrassment.

But she had no intention of abandoning her dangerous plan now.

She was deliberately using this gown to draw attention to her figure, rather than to her hand. In her left hand was a hypodermic needle and syringe which she had taken from a drawer of her dressing-table. She concealed it in the bunched folds of a handkerchief.

When she skipped gaily out to the room where the wireless was noisily playing she was a picture to set any man's heart on fire.

They danced. Snap held the girl unpleasantly tight. But Alice Dodge endured it stoically. She was waiting for her chance.

The chance came as they whirled in a corner of the room. The balled handkerchief fluttered from her hand that rested light on the back of Snap's hunched shoulder. The needle crept to the spot on Snap's neck where the drug would most easily enter his blood stream and paralyse his muscles.

Snap gave a shrill yelp of astonishment and pain as the strong needle rammed home. A colourless liquid was expelled through its hollow point.

He sprang at her, his eyes black with rage. Too late, he realised that he'd been fooled. His clutching hand missed Alice's throat and ripped the frail gown from her shoulder. But it was a weak and impotent gesture.

He fell in a squirming huddle on the floor. For a moment his eyes opened and closed convulsively. Then a shudder passed over him and he became rigid and unconscious.

Alice Dodge bent swiftly over the fallen crook, searched him thoroughly. She found the paper that had passed between Duke Duncan and Snap in the taxi.

The sight of it turned her blue eyes to ice. She read it.

Alice Dodge rushed swiftly back to her bed-room and stripped herself of the tatters of her gown. Then she dressed rapidly, making a complete change of garments. The rest of her clothing and belongings went into a suitcase. She had rented this flat under an assumed name. There was nothing left to trace her real identity when she had finished.

Quickly the girl left the flat.

Snap Carlo didn't recover his senses for nearly an hour. Slowly his glassy eyes opened. He gave a weak groan and staggered to his feet.

Rage and fear whipped away the cobwebs in his brain. He rushed through the flat, seeking some trace of his clever foe. But Alice Dodge had left no clue.

Snap cursed in a spasm of helpless rage. Then he saw a telephone on a low stand in a corner of the room. It gave him an idea immediately.

Picking it up, he got through to the home of John Marsley. But he soon discovered that Alice Dodge was not known there. He had been fooled!

Snap stared at the useless receiver in his hand. He had already searched his pockets and knew that the paper that Duke Duncan had entrusted to him was missing. The cunning little lady had stolen it!

Who the hell was this Alice Dodge?

He made one more 'phone call, one that cost him a grim effort. It was a confession to Duke Duncan, who cursed Snap in a way that made the ears of the hench-

man tingle with rage. He ordered Snap to get back on the job and keep his eye on Leo Barry. To Duncan the whole thing looked like a partnership between Barry and the shapely little blonde.

FIVE AND ONE.

THE blackness of midnight had settled on the lonely countryside of Surrey. The figures of two crouched men made formless blots in the gloom. They stood together under the thick branches of an elm that grew at the side of a lonely lane.

Along the opposite side of the rutted lane was a wooden fence. It bordered the lawn of a cottage set back from the road amid a protecting screen of shrubs and trees. This was the cottage which John Marsley had selected as the spot where he was to transfer a fortune in cash.

The men waiting under the elm swore viciously. It was already past midnight. Marsley was late for his appointment. The two crooks were beginning to suspect trickery.

One of them was Duke Duncan. The other was Snap Carlo. They made no effort to lower their voices. They were sure they were unobserved.

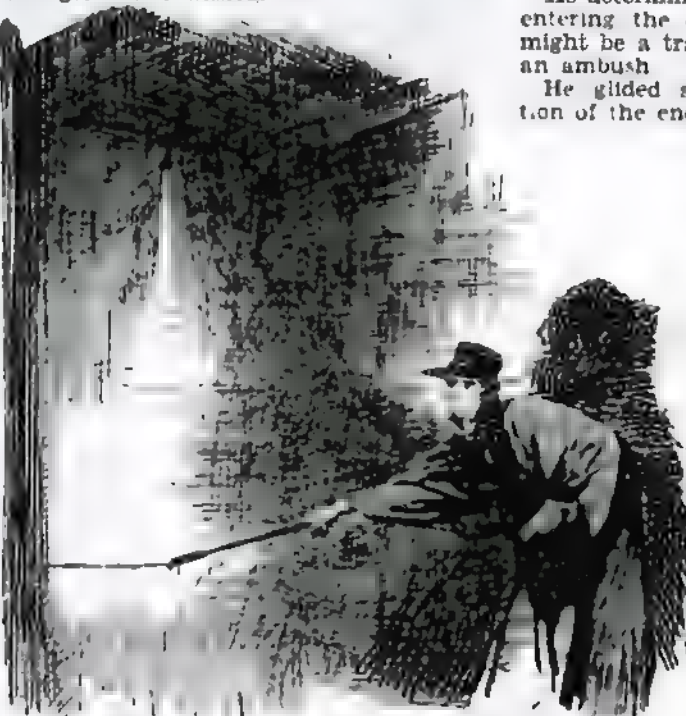
However, their lanced security was merely the result of over-confidence. Keen ears listened to every syllable of their conversation. A hidden watcher was directly over their heads, screened by the leafy branches of the elm.

The Shadow!

Moe Shrevnitz had done his job well. Cranston was aware of what was arranged for to-night. He was here to learn more of the hidden motives that linked Leo Barry with Duke Duncan and the millionaire, John Marsley.

The talk of Duke and Snap didn't make things much clearer. They were worried because Marsley was late. They were puzzled about a mysterious woman named Alice Dodge. Cranston learned for the first time how neatly Snap had been tricked by the young woman.

After a brief interchange of talk, the two crooks under the tree separated. Snap climbed over the fence and disappeared into the darkness at the rear of the cottage. Duke waited.



Cranston snapped the thread with the poker and a gun fixed against the ceiling exploded harmlessly. He had sprung the trap prepared for him.

Suddenly Duke gave a hissed exclamation. Far down the rutted lane, two bright lights glowed. They were the headlights of an advancing car.

Cranston, in his tree, could hear the faint murmur of the motor.

The car halted almost directly under the branches of the elm. Its headlights flashed on. So did the dome light inside the car. John Marsley was clearly visible behind the wheel. He was exposing himself deliberately, so that Duncan could be sure he was alone, as he had promised.

Duke appeared with a big automatic in his watchful hand.

"You got the dough ready?"

"Yes. It's in three suitcases, in my cottage. Is anyone with you?"

"No," Duke lied.

He climbed to the running-board and rode with the car along the narrow drive to the cottage grounds. The car vanished behind the house, and its lights snapped off. Silence followed in the bleak darkness.

Cranston dropped swiftly, silently from the tree. Like a part of the night itself he glided across the road. He crept cautiously toward the rear of the house. Footsteps in the soft earth showed where the millionaire and the crook had gone. The prints led straight to the closed rear door.

Trying the knob with infinite care, Cranston discovered that the door was locked on the inside.

He moved onward to the other side of the house, toward the kitchen. His plan was to gain access to the house by means of the pantry window. But when he reached it he found the pantry window wide open!

Someone had forced it cleverly. There were marks on the wooden sill that showed where pressure had been applied.

The Shadow had anticipated that three men were now inside the cottage. He had seen Marsley and Duncan enter the grounds in the car. He knew Snap Carlo had already sneaked inside, probably with the aid of a skeleton key. Who then was the fourth intruder who had forced the window?

He determined to wait a moment before entering the open window. The thing might be a trap to entice him inside for an ambush.

He glided silently toward the protection of the encircling shrubbery. He had barely vanished when he heard the stealthy sound of feet. Cranston's interest grew. The trespasser's face was clearly visible as she crossed the lawn to approach the open window. A girl!

The Shadow noted her prettiness; her fair hair. Remembering the snatches of talk he had heard from Duke and Snap, he was convinced at once that this girl was the smart and dangerous Alice Dodge.

Alice wasted no time. A lithe leap lifted her to the sill of the pantry window. A moment and she was gone.

Alice Dodge made the fifth visitor to enter this lonely cottage. Four men and a woman converging in the darkness of midnight for the lure of a fortune in cash.

Cranston made himself the sixth. His entry through the window was soundless. He found himself in a room floored with squeaky boards. But he managed to reach an open door without betraying his presence, and to gain the confines of a narrow passage.

The darkness was profound. Not a light gleamed from the ceiling in the hall. But he took no chances. He searched every inch of the ground floor. His eyes, accustomed to darkness, satisfied him that he was alone.

He climbed a flight of stairs to the floor above. Here, his progress was infinitely careful. It was justified, for folds of the carpet caught the light, the infection of a human voice. It was the voice of John Marsley. It came from behind a door almost at Cranston's elbow. A halcyon of yellow light showed under the door. The rumble of Duke Duncan's voice added itself to the more cautious whisper of the waltz.

Gently Cranston crouched. He applied an eye to the keyhole; he could see both Marsley and Duncan. They were standing in the centre of a carpeted room. There was no sign of the furtive Snap Carlo, nor of the mysterious Alice Dodge.

The voice of John Marsley sounded crisp and oddly firm. It was the attentive ear of Lamont Cranston.

"I told you that I'd come here alone—and I've kept my word. The money is here, every penny. It's yours, as soon as you hand over that blackmail evidence."

"Show me the money first"—cautiously, from Duncan.

Marsley laughed softly. "I expected you to say that. The money is in three suitcases hidden in a small niche behind a secret panel in the east wall of this room. If you will permit me to show you."

He rose forward. But Duke Duncan caught at his arm with a tigerish gesture, pulling the banker back on his heels.

"Not so fast! If you don't mind, I'll open the panel and if you've got it 'ee inside there, with a gun, it'll be just open to him and you! How d'you open it?"

Marsley told him. A pistol glinted in Duke's big fist. He approached the wall warily. Dropping to his haunches, he swayed his body aside so that only his right hand was in front of the panel. A click. The wall slid smoothly aside.

At the sound of the click, Duke Duncan darted swiftly aside from the panel. He waited for the hidden roar of a gun. But nothing happened. Only silence filled the room.

He peered cautiously into the open niche. It was black inside the wall, but the dim light from the room itself was sufficient to identify the objects that were visible in the opening.

Leather suitcases! Three of them! Gingerly, Duke slid the nearest of the suitcases out on to the floor in front of himself and Marsley. His eager hand reached for the attached key.

At that very instant, the light in the room went out!

There was a gasp from Marsley, a roaring yell of alarm from Duke. It was followed by the echoing thunder of gunfire.

Cranston, crouched at the keyhole of the door, recognised the nature of that grim explosion—the roar of a shotgun. He could hear the lead pellets across the floor, then lead pellets that cut short the strangled cry of Duke Duncan.

It was followed by a weird silence.

Cranston sprang to his feet. His gloved hand sent the door flying open. Into the blackness of the room he sprang, both hands extended grimly before him. His right hand found an open door. From his left darted the pencil-like radiance of an electric torch.

The beam fell upon a horrible sight. Duke Duncan lay at full length where he had fallen.

There was no sign of John Marsley. He could have vanished into only one place—the dark niche in the wall. Cranston bent over the body of the slain Duncan. Black-gloved hands swiftly searched his pockets. There was no evidence of a struggle there. The document for which Marsley had offered to pay a fortune was gone—stolen!

In an instant, Cranston hurried the dead body. His flash filled the niche in the wall with brilliant light. He saw what he expected to find—a flight of narrow stairs inside the waltz. The stairs led downward into pitch blackness.

The light of his torch went out. Stealthily, silently, he began to descend the staircase inside the wall.

THE CEILING GUN.

For almost a full minute after Cranston had descended through the panel opening, the pitch-dark room he had left remained as silent as a grave. Then a faint creak echoed from the door leading to the hall.

Someone had turned the knob and was cautiously entering. Then the beam of an electric torch glowed.

The torch was held in the quivering hand of a girl. Her eyes gleamed like frozen stars. The girl was Alice Dodge. She cringed as the light fell on the shattered head of Duke Duncan.

There was no sign of the suitcase Duke had dragged out from the open niche. There were remaining two suitcases visible. All three had been whisked away by the cunning murderer of Duncan.

Conquering her horror, Alice Dodge forced herself to kneel beside the body of the racketeer. She searched Duke's body. Her fingers explored every pocket. But she found nothing.

She rose to her feet, had barely straightened her bent legs, when a tiny noise across the room turned her face sharply backward across the doorway.

A man's face peered into the room. The light of Alice Dodge's torch fell full on his swarthy countenance. The man was Snap Carlo.

Recognition was mutual. Snap recognised the girl who had dragged him earlier in the day. Now he saw her pale face across the room, twitching with terror behind the glow of her torch.

His hand moved aloft so fast that the glow was a swift blur. There was a knife in that poised hand. Snap grunted as he threw the knife.

The moment it fell Snap's hand, Alice extinguished her light and dropped the knife. She gave a bubbling scream that was cut sharply into silence in mid-utterance.

Snap began to creep forward. His low chuckle of murderous intent resounded ghoulily in the black void of the room. Alice Dodge heard the laugh. She was flat on the floor, where she had dropped the knife.

Alice Dodge reached its target. Its handle was still quivering on the wall above Alice's head. But the blade had missed her throat. She could hear the crawling silently across the floor, then rose to her feet.

Curtains draped the sides of the window. Their stiff folds swept the floor. Alice

stepped instantly sideways and slid behind the protection the curtains afforded.

She had hardly vanished when there was a faint click. Light from the room, from the torch Alice had dropped when the knife was thrown. Snap had found it and was moving the bright oval panel about at the foot of the room.

Snap gasped shrilly as the yellow beam exposed Duke Duncan. Shuddering, he cringed away, the bright beam of the torch veering at the room.

It was a purely involuntary action, but it sealed the doom of Alice Dodge. The top of one of her slippers protruded from beneath the folds of the curtain.

Snap Carlo charged forward with a yell of triumph. He was reaching for the curtain, when his hand froze in mid-air. Something happened outside the room to disconnect the snarling murderer. The crash of a pistol made an abrupt, roaring echo in the empty house. The sound whirled Snap around on his heels, his mouth agape with surprise.

It afforded Alice Dodge the split second for which she was praying. She did the thing Snap had intended to do. She ripped fiercely at the window curtain that shrouded her body. The draped material was torn from its support and fell in a heavy, billowing mass over the head and shoulders of the half-turned killer.

Then the curtain swathed him like a mummy. He bent, trying to tear the folds away from his head and eyes, and Alice kicked his feet from under him.

He went down in a heap. But the pistol still quivered in his clenched hand. Alice's heel smashed down on his arm, pinning it flat to the floor. Fear gave her strength.

She wrenched the gun from Snap, who momentarily slack grip, lifted it high, and smashed it down on Snap's jerking head.

Snap collapsed. He lay motionless on the floor, not six feet away from the body of his dead chief.

For an instant of reaction, Alice was unable to move. Then, abruptly, she heard the roar of a speeding car out side Marsley's cottage. It was followed by the crash of splintering wood.

Someone was escaping in a car from the murder scene. The car had driven at full speed in to the fence that divided the property from the lane beyond. The fence had gone down like matchwood. The hum of the disappearing car vanished in the distance like the sighing of a swift wind.

Uncertain what to do, Alice hesitated. The creak of a man's footsteps roused her from frozen paralysis. She saw from the black wall niche opening that the whisper of ascending footsteps came.

Alice whirled back toward the window with a gasp of terror. But at the door she hesitated. She threw herself outward through the window in a jangling of broken glass. Her body struck a slanting roof and slid at a frightful speed down the steep, black incline.

She plunged partly over the rusty gutter before her fingers caught the trail hold for which she was clutching. She gripped the railing and swung her tense grip. The metal creaked, but it held. She lowered herself from the sagging gutter. She hung at full length over the

black turf somewhere below. She had no idea how far the fall would plunge her. Her white teeth gritted. She let go.

When Lamont Cranston had descended those narrow hidden steps inside the wall, his movements were silent, but as swift as the wind. He found an open panel at the bottom of the long flight. Stepping cautiously through, he entered the kitchen of Marsley's cottage.

Someone ahead of him had turned on a dim light. There was no sign of the

millionaire's car still stood empty and dark where he had left it.

A narrow passage led forward from the kitchen to the front of the cottage. The light was very dim from the single bulb that hung from the ceiling. Cranston approached the beginning of the narrow passage with wary attention. He suspected a trap.

His suspicion was justified. Across the width of the passage, about a foot above the floor, a taut black thread had been stretched. It was almost invisible. The

brains had actually saved the girl's life; but yet, he was the author of the tense drama that had developed on the first floor of the house.

Through the open front door of the cottage, Cranston leaped into the blackness of the open ground.

A car was racing into view from behind a tangle of bushes. It sped straight for the wooden fence, smashing it flat under the spinning wheels as it crashed to the black lane outside the golf course.

The escaping car vanished down the black lane with a hum of power that rapidly drifted into nothingness.

Cranston had no chance to prevent that desperate flight. He knew, however, the identity of that crazy motorist. He had seen spinning wheels as it crashed to the safe, twisted with triumph. Cranston wanted Leo Barry to escape. The case had not yet developed to the point where he wanted to apprehend this man.

He was turning on his heel to glide back inside the house, when another unlooked-for event changed his purpose.

A window on the first floor of the cottage had been shattered to pieces with a loud jangle of falling glass. Through the broken window a dark slender body hurled itself. It rolled over and over, down the steep slant of the out-house roof.

Cranston raced forward to come to grips with this new enemy.

THE SAND PIT.

The crash of glass that had drawn Cranston to the south side of Marsley's cottage, came from Alice Dodge's desperate dive through the window. He witnessed her swift, rolling descent down the steep roof. She was preparing to drop to the black turf below.

She clung to a single grip. She gripped downward through space, her fingers struck the dark earth with both feet. She was clever enough to bend her silken knees in an effort to cushion the fall, but the impact was terrific, none the less. It pitched her forward on her face.

Alice Dodge began to hobble away, increasing her speed with each faltering step she took. Her goal was the thick tangle of shrubbery that lined the side of the cottage property. The black woods swallowed up her fleeing figure.

Cranston did not attempt to cut her off. He could easily have done so, but he had a double purpose in mind. His first was to find out if possible the unknown leader of crime for whom this desperate girl was working. From the direction of Alice's flight through the woods, he calculated that she would break through to the road at almost the exact spot where he had left his own car.

Cranston took the clock, unimpeded route through the cottage grounds, rather than the bramble-twisted path the girl had taken. He reached the car and found it empty, as he had left it.

In a trice, he opened the door of his car. His slouch hat and his black robe slid away from him. The disguise was thrust into a hidden compartment with the keys. The Shadow was now Lamont Cranston.

But a ripple passed over his mobile face. His mouth and features seemed to writhe. With a look of intense pain, he saved the habitual expression of his face, Lamont Cranston also vanished.

In his place was a smiling stranger. A man who had been through whose expression seemed almost timid. Well-dressed, faultlessly groomed, he seemed like a harmless, good-natured citizen



The girl was desperate. She flung the curtain over Snap Carlo's head and stamped on his wrist to disarm him. She had to escape somehow. A man's life depended upon it.

fugitive millionaire, nor of any of the other intruders in this house of mystery. But there were bulky leather objects on the kitchen floor that made Cranston's eyes gleam with understanding.

Three suitcases. All three had been burst recklessly open, disclosing their contents. There was no sign of the money that Marsley had supposedly crammed into bags and stashed away in the neat packets of ordinary newspaper. They were scattered all over the floor.

The rear door of the cottage was open. A quick look convinced Cranston that the murderer had fled via the rear door because of the nature of the prints in the soft earth. They all pointed inward toward the house. Also, the

leg of a hurrying man would instantly show that footprints in the sand.

Cranston snapped it, but not with his own body. Darting across the kitchen to the stove, he picked up a long, metal poker. He stood with his cloak firmly and carefully bent aside from the passage. His arm jerked outward. A quick jerk of the poker broke the black thread.

Instantly, from the ceiling of the dark passage, a shot roared. A bullet thundered into the floor at the exact spot Cranston would have stood, had he advanced as he calculated that the murderer had intended him to do.

It was the explosive report of an ambushed pistol that the frightened Alice Dodge had heard upstairs. Cranston's

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His suspicion was justified. Across the width of the passage, about a foot above the floor, a taut black thread had been stretched. It was almost invisible. The

brains had actually saved the girl's life; but, as yet, he was unaware of the tense drama that had developed on the first floor of the house.

Through the open front door of the house, Cranston leaped into the blackness of the open grounds.

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The escaping car vanished down the black lane with a hum of power that rapidly drifted into nothingness.

Cranston had no chance to prevent that desperate flight. He knew, however, the identity of that crazy motorist. He had caught a revealing glimpse of a pale, ratty face, twisted with triumph. Cranston wanted Leo Barry to escape. The case had not yet developed to the point where he wanted to apprehend this man.

He was turning on his heel to glide back inside the house, when another unlooked-for event changed his purpose.

A window on the first floor of the cottage had been shattered to pieces with a loud jangle of falling glass. Through the broken window, a dark slender body hurled itself. It rolled over and over, down the steep slant of the out-house roof.

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THE SAND PIT.

THE crash of glass that had drawn Cranston to the south side of Marsley's cottage, came from Alice Dodge's desperate dive through the window. He witnessed her swift, rolling descent down the steep roof. She was preparing to drop to the black turf below.

Her clenched fingers let go their grip. Downward through space she whizzed, struck the dark earth with both feet. She was clever enough to bend her silken knees in an effort to cushion the fall. But the impact was terrific, none the less. It pitched her forward on her face.

Alice Dodge began to hobble away, increasing her speed with each faltering step she took. Her goal was the thick tangle of shrubbery that lined the side of the cottage property. The black woods swallowed up her fleeing figure.

Cranston did not attempt to cut her off. He could easily have done so, but he had a double purpose in mind. His first was to find out if possible the unknown leader of crime for whom this desperate girl was working. From the direction of Alice's flight through the woods, he calculated that she would break through to the road at almost the exact spot where he had left his own car.

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leg of a hurrying man would instantly snap that frail barrier.

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It was the explosive report of an ambushed pistol that the frightened Alice Dodge had heard upstairs. Cranston's

whose car had broken down on a lonely country road.

He drew himself out of sight behind the car.

The next instant, bushes crackled and waved. Alice Dodge sped breathlessly into the open. A gasp of delight burst from her lips as she saw the motionless car. She sprang inside.

But a nimble gentleman had slid out of darkness to the seat beside her—a very peaceable and inoffensive man in a light-grey suit of expensive cut.

"You surely wouldn't try to steal my car, young lady?"

"Who—who are you?"

"Peter Lane is my name. I hope I didn't frighten you. I got out to look at my petrol tank. What's wrong? Are you in trouble?"

"Yes!" Cranston was conscious of her sharp, shrewd glance at his mild face. He could see her mind swiftly fashioning lies to fool him.

"My name is Marie Endrick," she said, glibly. "I went to a road-house dance to-night with a boy friend. He asked me to ride with him afterwards in his car. He—he said that cottage back yonder was his, and he invited me in for a drink. He—he tried to—to make— Oh, it was horrible! I broke away and fled through the woods. Listen! He's coming after me, now! Save me! Don't let him harm me!"

The sound of a heavy body threshing through the bushes was distinctly audible. Cranston thought instantly of Snap Carlo.

The pursuing figure appeared suddenly from the dark screen of shrubbery. It wasn't Snap Carlo. In spite of the fact that he was panting and his face was scratched by brambles, there was nothing of the criminal look about him. It was John Marsley.

Cranston pretended not to recognise the international banker. Marsley blinked and hesitated.

"Who are you?" he growled. "What are you doing here on a dark road like this?"

"Peter Lane is my name. This is my fiancée, Marie Endrick."

Marsley's answer was vicious. A gun whipped from his pocket with lightning speed.

"You're a liar!" he snarled. "You're both liars! The girl is Alice Dodge! She's a thief! She tried to rob me back there in that cottage. Get out of that car with your hands up high, or I'll blow your head off!"

This last savage injunction was addressed to Peter Lane. Cranston obeyed. He could see pitiless death shining in the banker's cold eyes. He stepped obediently from the car, and under the menace of the gun, moved slowly around to the front of the car.

The gun barrel followed him like the needle of a deadly compass. So intent was Marsley on his captive, that he failed to keep his mind on the girl. It gave her an opportunity that she was quick to use.

She pressed the self-starter, put the car into gear. It leaped forward with a swift jerk that almost crunched Cranston beneath its wheels. He threw himself headlong aside, rolling over in the dirt. The car roared away with a screech of accelerated speed.

Marsley didn't fire a single shot after the vanishing girl. He had a double choice of victims, and he made it with criminal instinct. His gun muzzle was a pointing circle of death, as Cranston sprang to his feet.

"Don't move, Mr. Peter Lane! Walk

ahead of me!" Marsley growled. "Straight ahead! Climb slowly over that stone wall of the golf course!"

Cranston obeyed.

The strange procession led through unkempt grass and weedy patches of underbrush. Cranston was forced to advance towards a deep bunker near the eleventh hole of the golf course. He halted at its rim.

"Slide down!" the inexorable voice behind him ordered.

Cranston descended, feet-first, in a cloud of dislodged sand particles. Marsley followed. He placed the gun back in his pocket and began to laugh with a shrill, nervous tone.

"Is this a joke?" the voice of Peter Lane asked.

"The grimmest joke you will ever come in contact with in your whole life!" Marsley rejoined. "I have no intention of killing you, Mr. Lane. I was afraid only of that girl in your car. I wanted to get rid of her. I brought you here, to this lonely spot, because I've got to talk confidentially with you. I've got to entrust to you a secret that affects the well-being of our country, perhaps the peace of the entire world!"

It was impossible to guess whether Marsley was serious or lying. He pointed towards something that looked like a golf ball half-covered with loose sand.

"That golf ball you see lying there is hollow," he whispered. "It contains a secret that must be forwarded to Whitehall—to-night! The ball is a thin metal container, and the top unscrews. Inside it is a single sheet of onion-skin paper that contains a message written in Oriental characters. I have no longer any real hope of getting it to Whitehall alive. I want you to take this secret message to a man whose name I will give you."

Marsley reached down to pick up the golf ball. But he didn't touch it. Turning, he clutched at Cranston and shoved him viciously to one side.

Cranston saw something else in the sand. A slight lump was evident below the spot where his foot was descending. But he had no chance to regain his balance. His foot came down hard, and there was instantly a snap from a concealed steel spring.

Jaws of tough metal closed over his foot. Those jaws were edged with sharp-pointed teeth. They bit through the leather of his shoe and sunk into the flesh of his foot.

He went down as if he had been shot. Pain wrenched upward through his leg. It brought the sweat of agony to Cranston's brow. He rolled over and lay perfectly still, knowing that useless twisting might snap his ankle as it would a pipe-stem.

John Marsley bent over and disarmed Cranston.

"I don't quite know who you are, Mr. Lane, and I don't much care. I'd kill you right now, only I can't afford to risk the noise of a pistol shot."

His laughter purred harshly.

"Unless I'm mistaken, Snap Carlo should be somewhere in the vicinity. He's a handy man with a knife, they tell me. I'll leave you to Snap's grim mercy! Good-night!"

He went clawing up the steep side of the bunker, squirmed over the edge and vanished. For a moment the retreating footsteps could be heard faintly, then there was silence.

Cranston managed to writhe painfully to his knees. The bone of his ankle was

not smashed, as he had feared, but his trapped foot was in bad shape.

He reached for the golf ball. In spite of Marsley's lying speech, it was exactly what it appeared to be; an ordinary pitted golf ball. Cranston clenched it in strong fingers. He hoped to be able to use it as a lever to force open the steel jaws of the trap.

It was hard work, but Cranston was nerved by his immediate peril. Bit by bit, he managed to force the notched jaws slightly apart. He jammed the golf ball into the aperture and rested for an instant.

His stiffened fingers cracked under the effort he was making. The golf ball dropped to the sand, but before the jaws of the trap could spring back again, he pulled his shoe loose from the notched steel.

Squirming over the lip of the crater, dizzy from pain and exhaustion, he moved silently through darkness towards the road beyond the stone wall. He was able to rest his weight on both feet now.

He reached the stone wall, dropped low. There were chinks in the loosely piled stones and Cranston was able to peer through.

A police car was parked in the lane outside the grounds of Marsley's cottage. Beside it stood a policeman. He was holding in his hand a whistle on which he blew three signal blasts.

The signal had been meant for the ears of a comrade. A second uniformed man was hurrying out to the road from the cottage grounds.

"I was afraid something was wrong," the man with the whistle said. "Nobody came out since you went in. The house looks damned quiet. Was that message genuine?"

"It was, Tom. There's murder inside that cottage—and a pretty dirty job of murder, too! Whoever Stanley West is, his information was accurate when he sent us that warning 'phone message!'"

Cranston, listening intently behind the wall, creased his forehead in a thoughtful frown. Was West, too, in this murderous riddle? And Viola—what of her?

He added Stanley West and Viola to his list of people to be investigated, while he listened to the whispered talk of the two policemen beyond the wall.

"I found tyre marks outside the back door. A big car left there in a hurry knocking the fence down."

"Who's been murdered?"

"Duke Duncan! What d'you think of that for a sensation?"

There was an exclamation from his companion. But the policeman who had searched the cottage cut him short with a quick recital of what he had found inside the house. He swore excitedly, ended his story with:

"This is the rummiest murder case I ever ran into!"

And the two policemen moved away towards the cottage.

Cranston agreed with him—but the next instant he was ducking his head and flattening his body on the soft grass behind the stone wall. He ran straight towards the parked car of the policeman. In a single bound he gained the seat and slid behind the wheel. He awoke the engine to life. The car shot forward under the grim pressure of his unhurt foot.

At the noise of the motor, there came a double yell of alarm and rage from the two policemen.

Alice had fled down this same road, taking the exact route that Cranston was

now taking. There was an excellent chance that he might, by high speed, overtake her before she could vanish completely.

As soon as the country lane swerved into the highway leading towards London, Cranston forced every atom of speed the police car could muster. Every once in a while he swept through a tiny sleeping village. He had a hunch he was going to find his own car empty and abandoned in one of these dark villages.

Alice Dodge would be afraid to stick to it too long. She'd be apt to rely on the surer protection of a train ride to London.

The fourth village in which Cranston slackened his speed showed him what intelligence had already anticipated. There was a railway station on the left side of the road, a mere shed with a platform. Behind the platform was the dark shape of a parked car. One that Cranston recognised!

Grinding to a quick stop, he changed cars. He was now in his own. The police knew nothing of this machine.

Cranston continued through the darkness at a more reasonable pace. Shortly, he gave a low-toned chuckle. He had noticed the pale glint of white paper in a crack at the side of the seat upholstery. A small envelope and a sheet of white paper had slid downward and become jammed out of sight, with only its corner protruding.

Alice Dodge, in her fear and excitement, had failed to notice her loss. Cranston knew the letter was hers the moment he glanced at its outside. It was addressed to her, at a post office, to be called for.

The note inside was typewritten and very brief. Just two sentences. But those two typed sentences and the name signed at the bottom brought a cold gleam to the eyes of Lamont Cranston.

"Very much interested in your proposition. If I get what I want you'll get what you want!"

"STANLEY WEST."

Again the name of the sleek man-about-town, friend of Viola Marsley, was popping up in this tangled case. Cranston hadn't forgotten that it was Stanley West whose telephone warning had brought the police racing to Marsley's isolated cottage. What was West's game? And who was this Alice Dodge?

Cranston had plenty to think about, as he drove steadily back to London with an aching and badly swollen foot.

LEO BARRY RETURNS.

ALITTLE after nine o'clock on the following morning, an open car halted in front of the imposing town house of John Marsley. Stanley West alighted.

The butler who answered his ring seemed a trifle ill at ease. But West's cheery smile chased the gloom from the butler's sallow countenance.

"Good-morning, sir."

"Is Miss Marsley ready for her morning's golf?"

"I suppose so, sir." The butler hesitated. "She's in the library with her father. Perhaps I'd better —"

"Don't bother, Craig. I know the way to the library."

He clicked blithely down the hall and knocked at a closed oaken door. Marsley's voice called out "Come in!" and West entered.

He seemed surprised at the pale, unhappy look on Marsley's usually impassive face. Viola, too, seemed worried. Her

glance moved from the young man to her father. Then it returned to a pile of newspapers on the library table.

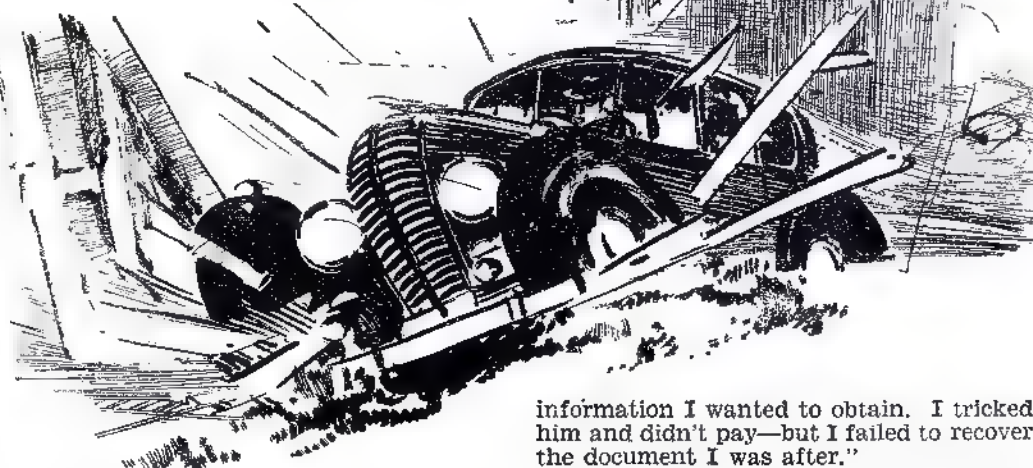
"Where in the world have you been this morning, Stanley?" Viola cried, anxiously. "I tried to get you on the telephone. Your number has been engaged for the past two hours!"

"I don't wonder at that," West grinned. "I've had reporters and detectives buzzing around me like flies! They all seemed to think I had something to do with the murder of that fellow named Duke Duncan."

"The papers say it was you who telephoned the message about the killing, from a call box in Surrey, last night," Viola faltered.

"Some rascal impersonated me," West replied quietly. "He was afraid to give his own name to the police, so he picked a name at random from the 'phone book. Unluckily, he happened to pick mine. But, luckily, I have a complete alibi. I was in London all last night, and I have friends to prove it. Don't worry about me. How about our golf, Viola?"

The murderer set the car at the wooden fence and shattered it to fragments in his frenzied get-away.



She didn't answer Stanley. She seemed to have forgotten him. She was again gazing at her father.

"Dad, I'm going to ask you something that may seem silly, even crazy. But I have a reason for asking. Do you know anything at all about the murder of Duke Duncan?"

Marsley didn't seem annoyed by his daughter's accusing question. On the contrary, he forced a wan smile.

"If you mean, do I have an alibi like Mr. West, my answer is yes. Like him, I was lucky enough to be in London last night. I have witnesses to prove it, if necessary. Why do you ask?"

He was amazed by the deep breath of thankfulness Viola uttered.

"Thank heavens," she murmured. "I knew that woman was lying! I could tell it from the sound of her shrill voice over the 'phone."

"Woman?" Marsley echoed. His face seemed to turn grey in an instant.

"She said her name was Alice Dodge. She declared that she had evidence that would send you to the gallows for murder! She—she accused you of killing Duke Duncan! She said you were talking to him at the cottage when he was murdered. She promised to keep quiet, if I meet her at a café in the West End. She has a proposition she wants to make me."

Marsley's emotion at the mention of Alice Dodge was impossible to conceal.

"I forbid you to leave the house!" he said hoarsely.

"It sounds like a kidnapping plot," Stanley West remarked.

"Exactly! Alice Dodge is a criminal! She was at the cottage in Surrey last night," Marsley asserted.

"But—if you yourself weren't there, how do you know that?"

Marsley walked abruptly to the closed door of the library. He opened it quickly with a sudden gesture. The butler was nowhere in sight. Closing the oaken door, Marsley returned to face the polite West and his wondering daughter.

"I was in the cottage last night," he said in a low voice. "My alibi story is not true. That cottage was purchased through an agent. I went there last night to pay Duke Duncan two hundred and fifty thousand pounds in cash! He had certain

information I wanted to obtain. I tricked him and didn't pay—but I failed to recover the document I was after."

"You—killed Duke Duncan?" Viola gasped.

"No. It was done in the dark. I don't know who fired the shotgun. I'm—I'm in a terrible fix! I dare not go to the police. And unless I can regain a certain blackmail document from the crooks, I'm literally faced with the unpleasant fate of death by hanging!"

Stanley West shook his head with a slow gesture that was meant to be reassuring. Marsley raised his hand to ward off interruption.

"I want you to know certain facts—in case I'm killed," he continued. "The blackmail paper to which I referred contains seeming proof that I was involved in another murder some months ago, for which a young man named Jack Skelly is now awaiting death. That particular murder was arranged and carried out by Duke Duncan. I give you my solemn word that I'm innocent—as innocent as Jack Skelly."

"But if Skelly is innocent," Viola cried, "why can't you clear his name and stop his execution?"

"Because to do that, I'll have to expose a secret that I've sworn I'll never do. If saving him means the exposure of my secret, Skelly will have to die!"

"Father, that's murder!"

"Call it what you like," Marsley growled, his eye on West. "In the vast network of conspiracy into which I've unwittingly

entangled myself, Skelly's life is unimportant. So is mine."

Viola crept sobbing into the arms of her defiant father.

"I think you had better tell me exactly who was present in your Surrey cottage last night," West said, in a persuasive voice.

"Duncan, of course, was there," he said. "So was Snap Carlo. Alice Dodge makes three. The fourth was a smooth scoundrel in a parked car by the name of Peter Lane. And a thin-faced little fellow named Leo Barry."

He choked on some hidden rage.

"Personally, I'm convinced that Leo Barry is the man behind the whole conspiracy. I've had private detectives on his trail. I know he visited Duncan the day before Duncan came to see me. I've found out the name of the hotel where Barry lives—"

"What hotel is he living in?" West interrupted.

Marsley named it: a second-rate place in Bloomsbury.

"I want you to leave London, Viola. Stay away until this horrible danger blows over. You've got to!"

"I fancy Viola will be safe enough if she remains indoors," West remarked placidly.

Viola took the cue West offered. In a tearful voice, she refused to leave London. Marsley was unable to shake her determination to remain at his side.

West smilingly agreed not to leave his own flat for the next few days, when Viola insisted that he himself might be in peril because of his association with her. When he left, it was with a low-voiced promise that father and daughter could count on his co-operation and help.

He drove to a garage and left his car there. Then he walked a little way along the street and hired a taxi. He changed cabs twice on the relatively short trip he made. His journey took him by a round-about route back towards the same neighbourhood where John Marsley maintained his expensive London house.

Stanley West walked the last two hundred yards to his flat—or, rather, the flat of a friend of his.

He knocked on a smooth door with a casual rat-tat of his knuckles. The sound was so quickly made that what was really a signal sounded like an ordinary summons.

The door opened promptly. It swung wide in the hand of an eager and very pretty girl.

Snap Carlo would have liked to see that girl. She was Alice Dodge.

Stanley West grinned at her as he stepped across the threshold and shut the door swiftly behind him.

"Well—what luck? What did you find out?"

"The kidnapping scheme failed," West admitted.

He didn't seem downcast. His eyes radiated a glow of satisfaction.

"But something else happened that made my visit to Marsley most fortunate. The old boy was so scared, he talked. I've found out the address of Leo Barry! And I repeat what I've promised all along: if you'll help me, I'll help you."

He picked up the 'phone book, found the number of a certain Bloomsbury hotel. When he had it, he spat the number over the wire like a bullet.

His talk was brief and peculiar. He got through to the man he asked for, but he didn't converse with him. He merely listened to the sound of the voice and murmured quickly. "Excuse me—wrong number." Then he rang off.

"Leo Barry has returned to his hotel," he told Alice tonelessly. He jammed on his hat and started for the door.

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going to pay a call—after some minor arrangements are made—on Mr. Leo Barry."

His whispered words were like velvet.

"You stay here, darling. Barry has stolen something that I need very much, if I'm to conquer John Marsley. So I'm going to finish Mr. Leo Barry, once and for all!"

THE SECOND MURDER.

CRANSTON'S immediate suspicion also had narrowed down to the foxy little blackmailer, quartered slyly out of sight in one of the Bloomsbury hotels. It was against Barry that Cranston intended to move.

Leaving his sanctum in Hanover Square, Cranston proceeded swiftly to the Bloomsbury hotel.

He went neither as the Shadow, nor as Lamont Cranston. The inoffensive Peter Lane took that journey through the noisy streets of London. He looked more timid than ever.

A quick survey of the hotel led Cranston to the rear yard in the gloom of a brick wall. He didn't attempt to climb the hotel fire escape. He took the darker route of the slanting steel fire escape on the rear face of the adjoining brick warehouse. No eyes saw the dapper Peter Lane ascend.

He made the leap across space successfully. He already knew the room Leo Barry occupied. Lifting the window with a small but tough steel implement, he slipped silently into the dark suite. Barry was evidently away from his rooms.

Cranston drew down the blind and prepared to make a thorough search. He found the light switch and turned it on.

With the click of the switch, he froze into immobility. He stood for a long time perfectly rigid. His gaze remained intently on the floor at a spot near the foot of the bed.

A man was huddled there in ghastly death. Death had come to Leo Barry in exactly the same way it had come to Duke Duncan. The face was unrecognisable.

Cranston made an instant deduction. The murder could not possibly have happened in this hotel room. The noise of the shotgun blast would have been terrific. The killing had been done at some other spot. The dead man had been brought to this room inside a conveyance of some sort; probably a trunk.

But where was the trunk how concealed?

Cranston had not attempted, as yet, to figure who might have killed Barry. A glance at the wallpaper on the wall near the corner provided a partial answer to that question.

It was a grim, boastful answer that plunged the case into deeper mystery than ever. Death had exonerated Leo Barry from guilt. The real criminal was self-exposed in the red-scrawled message signed—The Phoenix.

It has become necessary to my safety to remove Leo Barry as I have already removed Duke Duncan. This is to announce to the police and the newspapers that my third and final victim will be that very annoying personage who calls himself the Shadow.

THE PHOENIX.

The message was proof to Lamont Cranston of what he already suspected. He was warring with a conceited super-criminal!

Marsley was the name that first occurred to Cranston, because of a small object he found wedged in the dusty crack at the edge of the bed-room rug. It was a tie-pin with a tiny emerald. It glowed like cold green fire in Cranston's palm. He himself had seen that tie-pin in Marsley's tie, on the night of Duncan's murder in the Surrey cottage.

Was this clue a real one? Or was it the cunning device of a shrewd murderer to lead the trail to the banker?

No answer was visible in Cranston's eyes. He let himself softly out of the room to the deserted corridor outside. There was a goods lift shaft there. It was for the convenience and speed of busy servants.

Cranston pressed a button alongside the shaft and stepped swiftly into the empty lift when it appeared.

He pushed the "basement" button on the inside panel. The murderer must have come and gone that way. So did Cranston. But before he left the lift, he found another clue to a man's identity, that brought a cold smile to his lips.

This clue was not one readily recognised, as was the emerald pin. It was a cigarette stub, smashed flat under the foot of some smoker. It was not a popular brand. On the contrary, Cranston had seen it only once in the last week.

That was the time he had watched Viola Marsley and Stanley West leaving the corridor of Marsley's office building for a round of golf. Both of them were smoking this expensive brand.

The crushed butt went into the pocket with the emerald pin.

The cellar exit from the goods lift was a concrete passage that led to a side alley. Adjoining the alley was a low fence, and beyond, a stretch of waste ground.

Cranston slipped silently over the fence, as he believed a cunning murderer had done before him. But the first thing that caught his observant eye was a closer object amid the weeds. A trunk! Cranston wasted no time forcing open the lid. He knew that the killer would be smart enough to leave no prints. His gloved hand gave him similar protection.

His tiny electric torch lighted up the inside of the trunk. It was a grisly sight.

Cranston made his way to a public telephone box in the character of Mr. Peter Lane. He made two hurried calls. One was to the town house of John Marsley; the other was to the flat occupied by Stanley West. Neither were at home.

Cranston was not surprised. Leo Barry was no longer a menace. Death had removed him in the same manner as Duke Duncan. An anonymous super-criminal had at last been forced into the open. The Phoenix admitted the commission of both crimes. From now on, it would be grim and unrelenting warfare to the death.

The Shadow versus the Phoenix!

THE PHOENIX.

THE morning newspapers were again black with headlines. The discovery of Leo Barry's shotgun-torn body linked him at once with the similar murder of Duke Duncan. The red-ink message on the wall, from the Phoenix, made it certain.

In his spacious drawing-room, John Marsley puffed moodily at a cigar and tried to parry his daughter's worried questions. He succeeded, until she mentioned the Phoenix. Then his own intense excitement forced him to talk.

Viola said faintly, "Do you think the Phoenix is the one who's trying to send

you to the gallows for a murder you didn't commit?"

Marsley laughed bitterly.

"Don't worry about that! It was only the beginning of the conspiracy. It was a method used to force something else from me. The Phoenix is not interested in hanging me—or the innocent Jack Skelly. He and I are both interested in something else."

He went on talking in a nervous undertone.

"I expect a coded cablegram to-day from a banking agent of mine in the Far East. If I can get that cable and decode it promptly, the Phoenix will have lost—and I will have won!"

"That should be simple enough," Viola said. "If the cable is on its way now, and you have the code book —"

"But I haven't!" her father groaned. "The code book was stolen from this house, two days ago! Without it, the message will be meaningless. Worse than that, I suspect the Phoenix may already have the code book."

His voice hardened.

"I'm explaining this for an important reason. I want you to stay here and take that cable message when it comes."

"You're going out?"

"Yes. I think I know the thief. If I work fast, I may recover the book."

Twenty minutes after Marsley departed, the doorbell rang. Viola hurried to answer it. But quick as she was, the butler, Craig, was even quicker. He had already signed for a yellow envelope. He handed over the yellow envelope and retired to his quarters at the rear of the house.

Viola decided to hide the important missive, not in her father's study, but in the wall safe in her own bed-room.

She was lifting her hand to the combination of the safe when she heard a creak outside her door. She turned suddenly. Her footsteps on the thick rug made no sound. Throwing open her door, she peered quickly into the hall. Craig was a few feet away, toward the head of the stairs. He seemed disconcerted as he saw the girl's rigid face.

"I—I thought I heard you ring," he said. "Did you want me?"

"No. I'm tired and I want to sleep. Please don't disturb me, for any reason whatever!"

"Very good," Craig murmured.

He descended the stairs. Viola had a feeling he would sneak back the moment her bed-room door closed. Again, she went to her wall safe. But this time it was for purposes of deception.

She no longer desired to hide the cablegram in the safe. But she wanted Craig to think she had. To this end, she opened the safe noisily, waited a moment, then closed it with a metallic bang. The envelope remained in her hand.

Her fingers lifted to the fastenings of her dress. In a trice she began to disrobe, throwing her garments recklessly aside. She stripped completely, as if preparing for a bath. But a bath was far from her mind.

Like a slim pink-and-white wraith, she tiptoed naked to her wardrobe and rummaged with nervous fingers. She found what she wanted and drew it

out. It was a yellow bathing suit. She put it on.

She pulled the zip fastening on a small pocket near the belt of the bathing costume. This pocket was her reason for the change of clothing. The cablegram went into the pocket and fitted flat and snug.

She dressed, and slipped on hat and coat. There was triumph in her face as she hurried downstairs. Had she known the truth, she would have been less satisfied with her cunning.

A man had poised outside the curtained window, on a narrow stone ledge that ran along the side of the stone dwelling. Viola had been unconscious of his surveillance.

His eyes saw the cablegram disappear into the pocket of the bathing suit. Before Viola was fully dressed and unlocking her door, the figure outside the curtained window had disappeared.

Craig was nowhere in sight when Viola, downstairs, rang for him. He appeared presently, panting a little. Viola told him that she had changed her mind and was going shopping. She asked Craig to tell her father to telephone her as soon as he returned.

"I beg pardon, miss. How will he know where you are?"

"As soon as I have done my shopping," Viola said steadily, "I'm going to the flat of Mr. Stanley West. My father can 'phone me there."

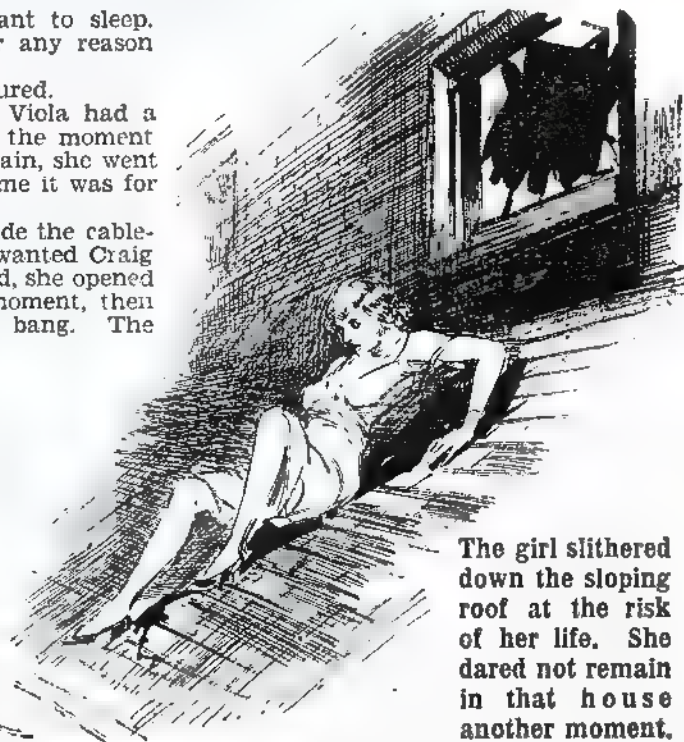
"Ah!" Craig breathed. He said no more.

Stanley West's flat was at no great distance from the Marsley home. Viola reached it by taxi in a few minutes. She was smiling with relief when she rang his bell. But her relief changed to quick disappointment: No one answered the summons. She was turning away, when her eyes lighted up with delight.

The door of the automatic lift was opening. Stanley West emerged with brisk strides.

"Viola! How charming of you to pay me a visit! Come in!"

She followed him inside, and up to his flat. Her explanation for her visit was vague and a bit breathless. When she came to the subject of the cablegram for her father, and the peculiar behaviour of the butler, West frowned.



The girl slithered down the sloping roof at the risk of her life. She dared not remain in that house another moment.

"You should have taken it with you," he said, slowly.

"That's just what I did!" she smiled.

She told West about her happy idea of the bathing costume. She explained to him that the envelope was concealed in a pocket, where no one would dream of looking for it.

West laughed admiringly. He seemed startled that so clever a device, and so simple, should have solved Viola's difficulty. He fidgeted for a moment, then he uttered a polite exclamation. He glanced at his watch.

"By Jove! I'm terribly sorry—but I wonder if you'd mind my deserting you for a moment or two? I meant to call in at the tailor's down the street. He has a suit I particularly want this afternoon. I'll be back in a jiffy. Do you mind?"

It didn't occur to Viola that tailors send suits home. Her mind was on the envelope she had concealed. She nodded. West mixed her a drink and handed her a magazine. Then he deftly excused himself and vanished.

West had hardly left when Viola sighed and put down the magazine.

A curious feeling of uneasiness began to possess her. She wished that she had accompanied Stanley West to the tailor's. She was afraid to wait here alone. The air of the flat seemed surcharged with a cold chill of peril.

Suddenly, she had an inspiration. She hurried into the adjoining bed-room of the suite. She had a nervous desire to rid herself of the dangerous document she was carrying. She looked swiftly about for a better spot to hide it. The bed-room rug attracted her eye.

In an instant, she made up her mind. Her silk legs showed candidly as she lifted her skirt. She fumbled at the pocket of the bathing costume and removed the cablegram. She shoved it under an edge of the rug, far enough back so that questing fingers would not be able to reach it.

Viola felt better as she tiptoed back to the living-room and reached for a magazine on the low table.

Her fingers halted before she touched it. She swung around to face the lounge leading to the flat door. A key was rattling in the lock. Viola felt a great surge of relief.

"Stanley!" she cried. "Back so soon?"

No answer came from the lounge. The hall door closed. Then feet padded forward with an odd, stealthy swiftness.

Viola's mouth flew open as she saw the intruder. It wasn't Stanley West!

An eerie figure in crimson was confronting her. A man robed from head to foot in metallic red cloth that glittered when he moved. Red slippers peeped from under the hem of his robe. An automatic pistol jutted ominously from a hand gloved with the same twinkling material.

The Phoenix!

No sound came from Viola's parted lips.

A voice snarled at her. It was husky, blurred, a sound like that of a tongue-tied man.

"The cablegram—quick! I have no time to lose! If you waste time, I'll kill you like Duncan and Barry!"

"I—I haven't got it," she gasped. "I gave it to Stanley West. He took it with him when he left!"

"You lie!" A grim chuckle made the crimson hood ripple. "It's hidden on your body. Remove your clothing!"

The gun pointed ominously. Modesty made Viola hesitate. Also, she thought that delay might bring help from the returning Stanley West.

She fumbled deliberately at the fastenings. She removed her dress and let it flutter to the floor. Reluctantly her slip followed. With flushed face, she stood attired only in silk stockings, shoes and the little bathing costume.

The Phoenix sprang closer. His hand jerked open the zip fastening of the pocket. He cursed as he saw it was empty.

"Where have you hidden that cablegram?"

"I told you I gave it to Stanley West."

"We'll soon see. Take off that bathing costume!"

Viola shrank back, her pale arms crossed desperately. Fingers thrust her protecting hands away. With a furious gesture, the Phoenix caught at the narrow yellow strap across the girl's white shoulder. He was jerking it loose, when suddenly he uttered a cry of alarm.

The telephone bell began to ring. At the same instant, Viola found her voice and raised it in a piercing scream of terror.

The Phoenix fled. He raced with thudding feet through the lounge to the door. The door opened and closed with a click that was drowned out by the sound of the ringing 'phone.

The half-fainting girl collapsed into a chair.

Presently, a key grated in the hall door lock. Stanley West hurried into the living-room with a smile on his handsome face.

His jaw dropped as he saw the half-fainting Viola sitting weakly in a chair. She was clad only in the yellow bathing-costume, with one shoulder-strap hanging loose. Viola replaced the strap with a shaking hand, as she noted the direction of West's gaze.

She swayed to her feet and the young

man ran forward. He supported her with a strong arm.

"Viola! Are you hurt? What happened? I had a queer feeling that something was wrong. I telephoned to see if you were safe. When there was no answer to my ring, I raced back."

His story sounded fishy to Viola. Had he concocted it because he knew the 'phone had rung while the Phoenix was in the room? Was West himself the Phoenix?

Slowly, Viola described the attack on her. She lied about the cablegram. She told West that the crimson apparition had found it in the pocket of her bathing-costume and had fled with it.

West didn't question her further about the loss. He merely suggested that she remain at his apartment until she had more fully recovered from her shock.

The shrill ring of the telephone created a diversion. West took a quick step forward. But Viola, who was closer to the instrument, reached the table first. She was overjoyed to hear the distant voice of her father.

"Viola! What are you doing in the flat of Stanley West? Craig just told me. Make an excuse and come home at once! You're in danger!"

"I'm just about to leave, dad," Viola replied. Her quiet laughter gave West no clue to what was being said on the other end of the wire.

"I 'phoned you before," Marsley continued. "You didn't answer. Why?"

"I'm coming home now. Good-bye, dad."

She picked up her outer clothing from the floor. West made no effort to stop her as she walked towards the bed-room. But she knew now he had lied about the 'phone. It was her father who had 'phoned!

With the bed-room door locked behind her, Viola tiptoed to the edge of the rug and found the envelope she had hidden. She tucked it back into the pocket of her bathing-costume. Then she dressed hurriedly and emerged.

Viola left West standing in his doorway, staring after her. With beating heart, she summoned a taxi and sped to her own home. But the moment she saw the pale, drawn face of her father, she knew disaster had struck from another quarter.

Marsley drew her into his private study. His voice was low.

"Burglars were here while you were away. They opened the wall safe in your bed-room. Craig was asleep and didn't hear a thing. We've lost the cablegram!"

Viola shook her head. She explained what had happened at West's apartment. But there was no elation in his eyes at the fact that she had managed to outwit the Phoenix. He took the cablegram envelope from her.

"You've got both the message and the code book now," she cried eagerly. "All you have to do is compare the two and reduce your message to English."

Marsley groaned.

"I haven't the code book," he admitted. "My suspicion of its whereabouts was wrong. The person I suspected didn't have it. The cablegram you saved is of no use to me."

He took the envelope, however, and placed it in a drawer of his study desk. Viola, peering, saw something else that was jammed inside the drawer. The sight of it brought a startled cry from her. Rolled tightly together in a shapeless mass, was a bundle of red cloth. Viola clutched it and drew it out. It was an

exact duplicate of the crimson robe the Phoenix had worn in his attack on her at West's flat.

"Father, where did that come from?"

"I—I don't know. It was there when I opened the drawer."

The blood left his face, when his daughter told him what it was.

"The Phoenix must have been the one who tried to rob the safe upstairs," he muttered. "He left his robe here in an effort to incriminate me."

A dozen questions trembled on Viola's lips, but she choked them down. Her father's face seemed to reflect guilty confusion. The girl's shoulders slumped. She was suddenly very tired. Without a word, she moved from the room.

Viola was so deathly tired that she stumbled over the threshold of her bedroom. She thought that if she didn't try to rest, she'd go mad with worry. She locked the door, and went to her wardrobe for a negligée.

But the wardrobe door opened of itself. A pistol pointed at the pale face of Viola. She found herself confronted by a pretty blonde with thin lips and merciless blue eyes.

"Quiet—or I'll kill you instantly!"

It was Alice Dodge. She backed her victim to the bed and forced her to sit down with hands raised.

"I want that cablegram!" she snapped.

Exhaustion fled from Viola at sight of her feminine foe.

"You're too late. I haven't the cablegram."

"Where is it?"

"Ask Stanley West."

"He hasn't got it. You're lying!"

"You ought to know whether he has it or not. You're hand in glove with him. You know he's the Phoenix, don't you, you crook!"

Viola's scorn seemed to infuriate Alice Dodge. Her blue eyes flashed, and colour flamed in her pale face.

"You talk of crooks, and your own father a murderer!"

"You can't pin the death of Duke Duncan on him!" Viola cried.

"I'm not talking about Duke's murder," Alice Dodge said tensely. "I mean that John Marsley killed a man three months ago, and left another victim to take the rap. That innocent victim is in gaol now. His name is Jack Skelly. He's doomed to hang unless your crooked father exonerates him by confessing. That's why I'm here. I intend to force your father to confess!"

"It's a pack of lies! Skelly is guilty!"

The gun barrel in Alice Dodge's hand was no colder than her reply.

"You'd have to live a million years to convince me of that. I love Jack Skelly! He's going to be cleared before morning. He's going to walk out of prison a free man—and I'm going to marry him. Proudly!"

Her left hand jerked forward, dragged Viola from the bed. Her gun pointed towards the bed-room telephone.

"I happen to know that you brought the cablegram back here with you from West's apartment. You gave it to your father, downstairs. I want you to pick up that telephone and get through to your father's study."

"Suppose I refuse?"

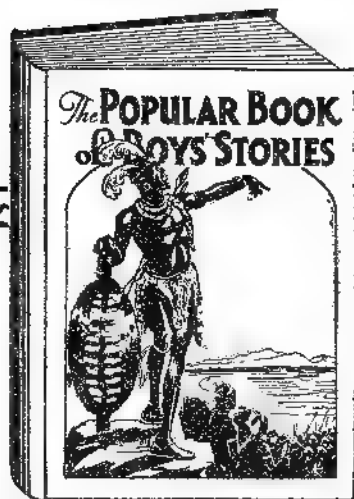
"I'll count to ten before I shoot. One—two—"

There was no bluff about it. The blonde was nerved to kill.

"What—what shall I say?" Viola faltered.

"Tell him to bring the cablegram up here to your bed-room. Tell him you've

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suddenly thought of a way that it might be decoded without the stolen book."

Viola picked up the 'phone and summoned Marsley.

Footsteps sounded down the passage. Alice softly unlocked the door. As the banker stepped in he saw only the pale face of his daughter. Viola's arms were lifted stiffly above her head. She was staring past Marsley's shoulder.

Marsley whirled. As he did so, Alice Dodge sprang at him. She snatched the yellow envelope from his hand. Her gun jabbed him viciously, forcing him backward beside his daughter.

"It won't do you a bit of good," Marsley said. "Without the code book, you can't translate the message."

Alice began to laugh stridently.

"I've got the code book!" she jeered. "I'm the one who stole it! I've got the whiphand at last, you damned murderer! I'm going to use the information as ransom for my sweetheart's life! Turn around! Both of you!" The shining gun made resistance hopeless. "Walk slowly ahead. Into that wardrobe cupboard!"

With father and daughter in the recesses of the cupboard, Alice locked the door on them.

Alice sped to the bed-room window and peered out. The coast was clear. The shadowy lawn below the window offered an easy escape. She reached it without trouble by making use of a knotted rope that hung down from a stout hook used by window cleaners to anchor their safety belts.

As she fled across the lawn towards a low masonry wall flanked by evergreens, she met unexpected peril. A figure rose from concealment directly in front of her. A fist struck her in the face, dazing her. The gun was wrenched savagely from her hand.

Snap Carlo stood over the fallen girl.

Snap searched her with grim haste. He snatched the envelope which Alice had risked her life to obtain. A quick upward leap, and Snap was over the stone wall that paralleled the street outside.

But a dark figure leapt at him. One blow and Snap fell, stunned. The cablegram changed hands once more. Lamont Cranston had been watching and had acted!

THE VOICE IN THE WALL.

MORNING sunlight flooded London. It touched every spire and peak of the greatest city in the world.

But there was one spot where sunlight didn't penetrate: The Shadow's sanctum in Hanover Square.

Underneath the blue-shaded light, Cranston's long-fingered hands were sorting newspaper cuttings. There were six or seven of the cuttings. They lay in a neat pile. All were exactly alike. They had appeared in the "personal" columns of every morning newspaper.

HENRY: All is forgiven. Need you. Communicate at once. Hudson 2119.

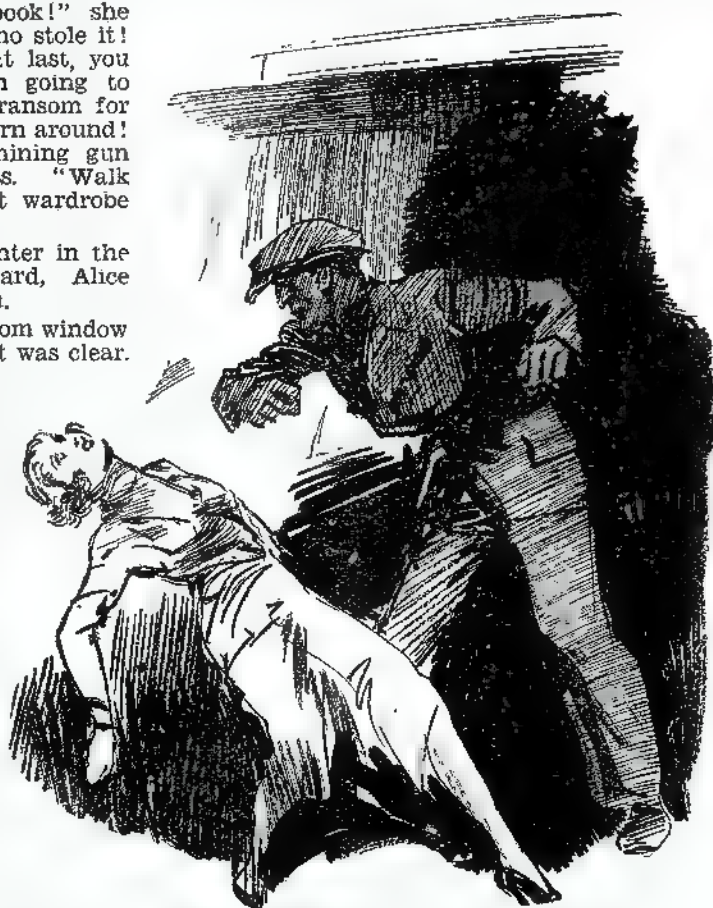
PETER LANE.

Grim laughter eddied from the lips of Lamont Cranston. He had baited a trap

to lure the Phoenix into the open. The newspaper was the trap. The innocent-looking "personal" was the bait. The name of Peter Lane was no secret to the Phoenix. He would know instantly that the ad. had been inserted by the Shadow himself. It looked like a secret device by which the Shadow could get in touch with one of his agents.

The chances were excellent that the Phoenix would regard the message as a stroke of pure luck. He would pretend to be the mythical "Henry." He would telephone Peter Lane and attempt to hoodwink him.

Such was Cranston's sure belief. It was based on accurate psychology. He waited grimly for a tiny indicator light to wink at his elbow. The rapid winking of that



Snap Carlo leapt out of the shadows and stunned the girl with a blow. She had the all-important cablegram and it meant a fortune to him.

light would mean that Hudson 2119 was being called.

It would do a criminal no good to attempt to trace that telephone number. It belonged to an office in the building next to the shrouded sanctum where Cranston sat. The 'phone was connected by a temporary extension to the instrument before which Cranston waited. His sanctum telephone was a private wire, unlisted, unknown.

Suddenly his rigid pose changed. The tiny signal light was winking furiously. Tapering fingers moved forward. Headphones lifted to Cranston's head and were calmly adjusted.

"Yes?"

"Henry reporting!"

The voice was crisp. It carried the respectful intonation of an underling addressing his chief. Cranston smiled. He played the farce through.

"Report acknowledged. Important de-

velopments ready to be acted on. Where are you now?"

The voice told him swiftly. Too swiftly. There was an undercurrent of eagerness in the racing reply. The Phoenix had expected to be asked that question. His ambush was ready.

The address he gave was that of a private house in the northern suburbs. It was a dreary, undeveloped spot in a region of unkempt park-land and unpaved streets.

Cranston made a note of the address. He tested his telephone caller by one more question. The question would disclose whether or not he was a fake.

"What time will suit you best?"

"Nine o'clock."

Again, eagerness was apparent in the clipped voice. The Phoenix didn't know it, but he had committed a blunder. No genuine agent of the Shadow ever suggested time or place when meetings were necessary. Obedience to the Shadow's will was their first requisite. They never suggested or advised. They listened and obeyed.

"Report received," Cranston said. "Stand by!"

He broke the connection, then sat for a long time, musing. To-night at nine, the riddle would be solved. Two men of superior attainments would meet: the Phoenix versus the Shadow!

Rain slashed out of a black sky over a dreary countryside.

Cranston was parked under a dripping covert of leaves at the edge of a lonely road. His car was without lights.

He watched through a partly opened window the black shape of the house that the bogus "Henry" had elected for his meeting with the Shadow.

Cranston was watching for arrivals at the lonely house. He anticipated more than one visitor to-night. Nor was he deceived. Presently a car drew up out of the fury of the storm. A man alighted. It was John Marsley.

The banker hurried through the sheets of rain to the front door of the house. He rang the bell.

The door opened immediately. But no one stood on the threshold to welcome the furtive visitor. Light from within showed an empty hallway. Marsley stepped inside and the door closed at once behind him. The automatic lock clicked.

Marsley's gaze dropped to the floor. It was bare of covering. But a few feet in advance of the spot where the dripping banker stood, a strange symbol was visible. It had been drawn neatly with chalk, so that it pointed down the hall as a silent marker. It was a combination of the letter "P" and an arrow tip.

Marsley followed the unusual mark as if he were not at all surprised. Down the hall was another symbol like the first. It led to a third, which pointed to a closed door of solid wood. Seemingly, the arrow-tipped "P" was pointing the way to the Phoenix.

Marsley had no need to turn the knob of that locked door. As he stepped in front of it, it unlocked and opened of itself. It closed at once behind him. The click of the lock seemingly made him a prisoner in the well-lighted, comfortable chamber.

Like the hall, the floor was bare of rugs. On one side of the room a queer device was fitted into the wall. It was a tiny metal flap, exactly like the cover of a letter-box. But it was large enough for a fairly big object to be passed through the slot. Marsley lifted the flap, saw only darkness, and closed it.

To the left of this peculiar adornment was a square metal grille set in the same wall. It looked like the fancy covering of a wireless loudspeaker.

Marsley smiled. His eyes lifted to the ceiling. There were flat brackets set along the picture-rail. The ceiling was high, well out of reach of Marsley's arm, but the nature of those brackets was immediately evident.

On each bracket a pistol was poised. Ten of them! Three on each of the side walls; two on the end walls. Their motionless and silent muzzles covered every inch of the floor below, except a single spot opposite the loudspeaker grille—if that was actually what the device was.

Marsley moved at once to this protected spot. He had barely reached it when the door of the chamber again opened. It closed swiftly behind a second visitor. Marsley cried out hoarsely as he recognised who it was.

It was his own daughter!

Viola's face was pale with fright. Her clothing dripped from the soaking rain outside.

"Viola! What are you doing here? How did you find—?"

"I followed you!" she cried tensely. "You sneaked away from home like a thief! Dad, what is going on to-night in this horrible house? Does it belong to you? Why are you here?"

Marsley seemed hesitant, shaken. Finally, he drew a letter from his pocket and handed it to Viola. It was unsigned. It promised Marsley he could have the stolen cablegram and code book which meant so much to him, if he came to this particular house at nine p.m. and exchanged information with his unknown host.

"You think it's—the Phoenix?" Viola faltered.

"Who else? I'm of the opinion that he—"

The sentence was broken off. Another visitor was entering the room—Snap Carlo!

Snap glared at the banker and his daughter. A gun in his hand menaced them both.

"So it's Marsley, after all!" Snap snarled. "Are you the Phoenix? Don't try to kid me! I'm jumpy, and I might shoot if I get worried!"

Marsley denied the half-admiring accu-

sation. He asked Snap if he had received a letter, and the mobster nodded shrewdly. He showed the banker the message. It promised Snap two thousand pounds as a goodwill payment to bind his partnership with the Phoenix.

Again footsteps were heard in the hallway outside. A fourth visitor entered, stared an instant, screamed. Alice Dodge!

Alice, too, had a letter from the Phoenix. After she had fought off her terror at the unexpected sight of Snap Carlo, she showed the missive.

"Hang it all," Snap growled uneasily, "how many people are coming here to-night? There's four here now!"

He had barely spoken when there were five! The smiling and very debonair Stanley West entered the electrically guarded chamber. Like the others, he was soaked with rain. The smile whipped from his face for an instant, then deepened at sight of Alice Dodge.

"I suppose you received a letter, like the rest of us, Mr. West?" Marsley said softly.

"None of your damn business!" West snapped. He was no longer concerned about his polite man-about-town mask.

"A regular party," he sneered. "Five of us, eh?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. West. Six is the correct number."

The voice was a bland murmur behind the group in the room. It was punctuated by the closing click of the door.

Peter Lane had arrived to keep his appointment.

At sight of him, Marsley gave an oath of rage. Alice Dodge gave an unintelligible cry. Her blue eyes were blazing. Like the others, she had crowded forward in a menacing half-circle that hemmed in Peter Lane.

"He was in that Surrey cottage the night Duke Duncan was murdered!" Alice charged. "He was at the hotel when Leo Barry was killed. I was watching!"

Snap Carlo's bull voice roared out an oath of satisfaction:

"Get back, everybody! I'll handle this bloke!"

The only perfectly calm person in the room was Peter Lane. He stared at the muzzle of the gun in Snap's jutting fist.

Still Cranston didn't move. He had seen that peculiar metal grating in the wall. His eyes turned towards it.

He could see nothing behind it save

darkness. But as the murderous finger of Snap Carlo began to squeeze his trigger, a voice issued from the wall with grim, menacing distinctness:

"Drop that pistol, Snap! Or I'll riddle you with bullets from those bracket guns! When the Shadow is to be killed, I'll attend to it personally!"

"Who the hell are you?" Snap roared. His pistol muzzle was pointing towards the mysterious loudspeaker grille.

Laughter gurgled from unseen lips. The blurred and familiar tongue-tied voice that Viola Marsley had heard in the apartment of Stanley West proclaimed its identity.

"I am your unseen host. The power that brought all you fools here to-night! I am the Phoenix!"

Snap was quick to realise his peril. He stood, white-faced, his jaw agape with terror.

"There are ten pistols on those high brackets. They cover every inch of this room," the voice reminded its victims. "You will do well to obey orders promptly. Snap Carlo, drop your gun into that slot in the wall."

If ever a man wanted to kill, it was Snap. But he walked to the metal flap, lifted it, and allowed his gun to fall into darkness. There was a thump as it landed in a hidden container. Snap started away. But the voice was not yet through with him.

"Take that second weapon out of your vest pocket and put it with the other! I know the exact number of weapons carried by each of you. A photo-electric eye searched you automatically as you passed through its invisible beam in the hallway outside. With the exception of Viola Marsley and Peter Lane, every one in this room is armed. You will deposit your weapons, one by one. John Marsley first!"

One by one, they did what Snap had been forced to do. All dropped their arms in the slot except Alice Dodge. She had a small, thin-bladed knife, and the voice sneeringly told her exactly where it was hidden.

With a flushed face, Alice was forced to lift her dress to her thigh to remove the weapon. She drew a knife from a sheath attached to her pink garter elastic.

The Phoenix laughed as the knife vanished into the wall slot. His next statement was a verbal bombshell.

"One of you guests has a certain code book. If the owner—man or woman will drop it in the same slot where you were kind enough to deposit your weapons, you will be permitted to leave this house unharmed. If not, every living being within this room will die! I will give you two minutes to obey."

A feverish argument started between West and Marsley—an argument in which Peter Lane took no part. He had moved closer to the wall towards a spot where he had noted the bracket guns did not cover.

"Give him the book, Marsley!" West growled.

"I haven't got it. You've got it—"

Marsley's words were interrupted. Snap Carlo's sudden rush toward the locked door brought a murderous climax. Snap's courage had cracked under the terrific nerve-racking tension. Like all ignorant men, he was terrified of forces he could not see. And he was wildly afraid that he had been double-crossed by a criminal master who no longer had use for his crooked talents.

Snap threw himself against the door with an attack that made the stout timbers crash. Twice he tried to smash

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his way to freedom. The second time the thud of his body was drowned by the stunning roar of a pistol shot.

Snap staggered back. He whirled, his face stupid with the glaze of death. He went down to the floor in a heap. He had been killed instantly.

The savage suddenness of Snap's end brought silence into the room. The glow of the ceiling light showed strained, watchful faces on the remaining men and the two women. Then every face vanished with startling abruptness.

The ceiling light had gone out. The room was plunged into blackness.

There was a scream from Viola. Alice cried out in fear. A hoarse exclamation came from one of the men. Then, with the same swiftness with which the light had vanished, it reappeared. The room was flooded with revealing brilliance.

The light disclosed an ominous figure with two steady guns pointing from outstretched hands. The hands were gloved in red. A crimson robe and a tall, pointed hood concealed the face and body of that figure, but not his identity.

The Phoenix!

The Phoenix was standing erect and motionless, with his back to the wall. The shimmering cloth of his crimson robe twinkled faintly. Mirth crawled in the eyes behind the slitted openings in the hood. But it was murderous mirth. It matched the unpleasant menace in the laughing voice:

"Good-evening—and be careful!"

John Marsley found his voice first. There was rage in his shaking cry, accusation in his pointing finger:

"West—that's who you are! You're Stanley West! He's no longer in the room!"

It was true. The handsome man-about-town, with the grim mouth and haggard eyes, was gone. The same interval of darkness that had produced the Phoenix, had removed all bodily traces of Stanley West.

The Phoenix chuckled, and did not deny the accusation. His voice rasped a command for silence.

"You see, I am determined to recover that missing code book. I am certain that one of you has it. The way to find it is to search each of you separately. And when I say search, I mean that literally and exactly! I am going to strip each one of you naked!"

Alice Dodge paled. Viola Marsley swayed closer to her father. His arm was hooked protectively about her.

Peter Lane was closest to the Phoenix. But he was unarmed. A forward rush was hopeless at this time. It was plain suicide. He relaxed visibly, and the Phoenix laughed.

"As a gentleman, I will follow the usual course in emergencies. Ladies first! I will begin my search with the lovely Alice Dodge."

Alice was standing with frozen despair, midway between Peter Lane and the hooded criminal. She screamed; but she didn't move. The twin guns prevented that.

"Alice Dodge, step forward!" the thick voice ordered. "Your modesty is praiseworthy, but you needn't worry. My search will be conducted in privacy. Your charms will be revealed only to me. Stand directly in front of me, with your shapely back to my gun muzzles!"

She backed up until she was directly in front of the red-robed figure. One of his guns dug with painful pressure into her spine. The other peeped over her soft shoulder and menaced the rest.

The heel of the Phoenix kicked lightly at the base of the wall.

What happened next was a wild mêlée of lightning-swift events. Behind the crimson-robed killer, the wall seemed to suddenly slide apart. As it did so the body of the Phoenix pivoted. The gun above Alice's shoulder flamed. She was shoved so brutally that she spun around, almost falling to the floor under the thrust of that powerful push.

But her falling body was caught in mid-air. The Phoenix sprang backward through the wall opening, with Alice's limp body sagging over one arm. The closing panel crashed shut.

But it closed on three figures, not two!

At the exact instant that the Phoenix caught the toppling girl, Cranston dived forward. The bullet that had flamed from the robed criminal's gun was aimed directly at Peter Lane. His twisting advance, however, jerked him sideways.

He ducked a half-inch under the leaden slug. Almost before the echo of the shot had roared, Cranston had reached the wall opening and was plunging after the girl and her hooded captor.

When the lock of the panel snapped, John Marsley and his daughter were the only living persons left behind. They stared with bulging eyes and wordlessly open jaws at the smooth surface of an unbroken wall.

Peter Lane was on the other side of that wall. He was at grips with the Phoenix!

"I AM THE PHOENIX!"

THE room on the other side of the barrier was a dimly lighted square chamber, with heavily draped walls. It was like the soundless chamber of a broadcasting studio.

But there was neither microphone nor signs of machinery of any kind. Not a stick of furniture was evident in the strange, padded interior of the room. The floors were covered with the same thick material that hung in dark folds along the four walls.

Apparently, the room contained no exit.

Cranston did not consciously notice these details. They flooded into his eyes with the automatic perception of a trained observer. He was conscious of them in the split second that hurled him through the panel opening and sent him plunging at the snarling figure in red.

Cranston's bent head struck his opponent in the stomach. It knocked the breath partly out of the Phoenix. But it was not sufficient to hurl him to the floor. Cranston accomplished this second victory by a swift, snake-like clutch of his hands.

His heaving jerk brought both men down in a squirming huddle. One of the guns was knocked from a crimson-gloved hand by the force of the impact. The second gun flamed again. Cranston had no time to protect himself from certain death. It was Alice Dodge who came to his assistance.

She had crawled like a silken-legged serpent across the floor from the spot where she had been hurled. Her teeth sank into the murderous wrist that held the gun.

The Phoenix screamed. His arm jerked wildly and the searing passage of the bullet speckled Cranston's cheek with powder marks and scorched him with hot flame.

Almost blinded, he did not flinch. He took advantage of the opportunity Alice's courage gave him. His fingers closed over the weapon.

He twisted it from the killer's grasp. He rolled to his knees, whirling the muzzle around to point at the red-hued criminal. The Phoenix dealt him a vicious kick in the stomach, pitching him forward on his face.

The Phoenix fled toward the unbroken surface of the draped walls. He lifted a loose segment of the heavy material and it dropped smoothly into place behind him. His escaping feet had made no sound on the padded floor of the room. His vanishing was equally noiseless.

With a bound Cranston was after his foe. The sight of the crook's swift retreat galvanised his aching body into grim strength. He lifted the cloth where the Phoenix had vanished.

There was no wall behind that section of the curtains. Instead, a narrow doorway showed the exit through which the

(Continued on next page.)



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criminal had escaped from a seemingly solid room.

The opening led to a narrow passage. No doors or windows showed along its dimly-lighted length. It was completely enclosed. But the swift race of Cranston's feet brought him to another unsuspected exit at the end of the corridor.

A door was partly open. It led to another passage that extended the length of the house. The front door was open, but that was only to deceive.

A wily criminal had cleverly doubled on his tracks. He was returning to the same draped chamber in which he had left the sprawled figure of Alice Dodge. Confident that the deluded Shadow was stumbling through the rainswept darkness outside the cottage, he was grimly returning to finish his enemies and ensure his own escape.

Down the long passage the Shadow could see vaguely the opening behind the concealing curtains of the room where Alice Dodge had been dragged.

A small, horizontal opening was dimly visible in the skirting-board of the passage wall. Dropping on his knees, Cranston found that a flexible, shutter-like device was concealed in the wall. A touch of his fingers lifted it like a compressing accordion. A space was revealed through which a man might easily crawl to a chamber beyond.

But Cranston did not pass through. Only his grim gaze darted through that aperture. It was enough to show him how the Phoenix had been able to send his voice through the loudspeaker grille in order to taunt his assembled victims.

The inside of the grille was visible. Electrical connections joined the speaker with a gramophone of unusual size and design. A flat record lay on the turntable. It was not in motion.

An empty chair was behind a flat and

narrow-topped desk. There was a row of black buttons across the surface of that desk. Cranston counted the buttons from where he lay peering. There were ten of them. Ten buttons—ten guns poised outside in the adjoining room on smooth brackets!

This, obviously, was how the Phoenix had operated.

A faint rustle drew Cranston's face away from the opening. Turning noiselessly on his knees, he saw a stealthy shape at the far end of the passage in which he was crouched. A crimson, shimmering robe glistened.

The Phoenix was peering down the long passage. But he failed to see Cranston. Darkness protected the master sleuth from discovery.

Rigidly alert, Cranston saw the Phoenix pass through the curtained entrance and vanish. The heavy curtain dropped behind his weird figure.

Instantly, Cranston darted forward. In a few rapid strides, he reached the curtain and passed through on the very heels of the Phoenix.

But the Phoenix had seemingly evaporated into thin air. It was the room where Alice Dodge had been left. There was no sign of the criminal or the girl. Both had disappeared.

A click in the panelled side wall, however, revealed where the nervy Alice had gone. The panel opened. It was the same one through which the Phoenix had dragged Alice.

At that time, she had been terrified, half-fainting, in the ruthless embrace of a killer who had sworn desperately to strip her stark naked in a search for the missing code book. Now, Alice was courageous again, eager, triumphant.

Behind her stood the wondering figures of John Marsley and his daughter Viola. Relief swept over their faces at sight of

Peter Lane. They no longer feared him as a criminal. They had seen him risk his life in a single-handed attempt to capture the Phoenix.

He asked a swift question. The question puzzled them. They shook their heads. None of them was aware that the Phoenix had returned on his trail. None had seen him reappear.

Peter Lane smiled. The answer narrowed his search. Stepping quickly back to the curtain-shrouded room, he began to circle the walls. His hand plucked at the heavy material. Then a portion came away. It disclosed a shallow recess in the wall.

A man was lying there in a limp huddle. His pale, frightened face brought an oath of rage from John Marsley. The hidden man was Stanley West.

West was wearing the same expensively cut suit which he had worn when he had first appeared in the cottage. There was no sign of the shimmering red robe of the Phoenix. With an ugly snarl, West denied that he was the missing master-criminal.

His story was simple. He claimed that at the moment the lights had gone out, following the swift murder of Snap Carlo, he had been struck a disabling blow in the darkness.

He had had no warning. Dazed, he fell to the floor. A powerful arm scooped him up and carried him to the curtained niche. He had collapsed there, helpless, while the Phoenix had made his appearance in the sudden glow of lights beyond the panel.

Unexpectedly, Peter Lane came to West's defence.

"He's telling the truth," he said mildly. "Stanley West is not the Phoenix!"

West began to splutter unintelligible thanks for this new, and welcome, ally. But Lane's next words drove the smirk from his lips and changed his smiling eyes to the muddy glint of murder.

"You are not now, and never have been, the Phoenix," Peter Lane declared calmly. "But you are almost his equal in devilish cunning. You're a vicious criminal in your own right! You're an international spy, a free-lance killer, and you've been working for the same ugly purpose that brought the Phoenix into this case."

"You're an enemy of this country and of humanity! For money you were prepared to plunge the world into another blood bath of an international war. You came here from America to steal Marsley's code book. But you failed—for I have that code book and the cablegram from the Far East. Marsley's secret is safe."

Stanley West screamed with rage. He launched himself at the body of Peter Lane.

But he was fighting a man prepared. Cranston had expected that assault. His rippling muscles made short work of the frantic spy.

A light, pliable cord, taken from West's own pocket, trussed him tightly. He twitched feebly on the floor, unable to move an inch.

"He's—not really the Phoenix?" Alice Dodge gasped.

"I am!" a throaty voice croaked behind their backs.

Jeering laughter met them as they whirled. A figure in shimmering crimson was standing ominously on the other side of the opened panel in the wall.

Cranston knew that true words had been spoken. The Phoenix himself—the real Phoenix—was at bay!

Cranston uttered a warning hiss to his companions to remain quiet. He himself



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did not move for an instant. The Phoenix had no guns in his gloved hands. What he held brought a gasp of terror from Marsley.

It was a frail glass bottle, swung high in the air so that a single gesture of the Phoenix would bring it crashing to smithereens on the floor.

Nitro-glycerin!

"I want that code book! One of you is going to produce it and toss it over here at my feet. If you don't, it means death for all of us! I'll admit I'm cornered; but the same is true for you. I'll give the person who has that code book sixty seconds to obey. At the end of that time, I shall smash this bottle on the floor and blow every one of us to pieces!"

John Marsley began to plead hoarsely. His voice rose in a terrified scream as the figure in red began to count ominously.

"One—two—three—four—"

The muscles of the robed arm that held the frail bottle of nitro-glycerin aloft were tensed to hurl the deadly fluid at the end of that measured count.

He failed to notice an important fact. Peter Lane was no longer in the ante-room with the others. The Phoenix merely thought he was.

Peter Lane, however, had left the chamber under cover of the confusion caused by that first snarling challenge of death. He slipped noiselessly into the corridor down which he had pursued the Phoenix after he had saved Alice Dodge from being stripped and then killed.

He glided like a ghostly apparition to the desk behind the dark interlacing of the grille in the wall. The grille was so contrived that from the outer room, it was impossible to see through the metal tracery.

But Cranston could see with clear fidelity the shoulders, the crimson-swathed back and the uplifted hand of the master-criminal. A clever use of a light-refracting device produced this uncanny one-way view. It explained why the Phoenix had been able to see his victims without their being able to see him.

"Forty-nine—fifty—fifty-one—"

On the flat desk surface, under the eyes of Lament Cranston, was a row of ten polished black buttons. They controlled the triggers of the guns mounted on the wall brackets of the outside room. But not one weapon pointed at the Phoenix.

He had stepped to the spot in the chamber not covered by those carefully pointed gun muzzles. Their snarling cross-fire would leave him unharmed.

"Fifty-nine—sixt—"

"Surrender, you stupid fool! The game is up!"

The voice of Peter Lane issued clearly from the black grille of the loud-speaker. There was calm command in it.

That very calmness infuriated the Phoenix. It told him that there was one man in the world who did not fear him. Peter Lane actually despised him, had called him a fool!

He took a leaping step forward. The hand with the bottle whirled to throw the explosive in a shattering crash against the grille.

But that one leaping step forward brought the Phoenix away from the safe spot where he had stood. He was now in accurate line with the rigid barrels of ten bracket guns connected with ten buttons on the desk behind the panel.

The palm of Cranston slapped down on all ten buttons with a single impact. Every gun in the adjoining chamber spoke simultaneously with a shattering echo.

The Phoenix tottered, pierced by a barrage of steel-jacketed slugs. The

fingers holding the bottle did not relax for an instant. They closed tighter, for a second, by the convulsive action of dying muscles.

The Phoenix slumped to the floor as one knee buckled under him. His heartbeat stopped for ever as he dropped to the floor.

The dead fingers, opening jerkily, allowed the bottle to fall towards the hard polished boards.

The bottle landed with a soft thud on the prone body of the dead Phoenix. It rolled gently to the floor beside him.

The irony of fate had used a criminal to achieve its just ends. By the interposition of his own dead body, the Phoenix unwittingly saved his victims from being blown to bits.

It was the very calm Peter Lane who picked up the deadly little container and placed it gingerly in a safe spot.

Viola had fainted. Marsley was frozen on his feet, incapable of motion. Alice Dodge was moving chalky lips, as if reciting an inaudible prayer.

"There is no need for further alarm," a quiet voice told them. "This case is ended."

They stared at Peter Lane.

A ripping motion tore the mask away from dead, waxen features.

The dead criminal was Leo Barry!

THE END OF PETER LANE.

"BUT—how—I don't understand! I—I thought—"

John Marsley's voice was shaky.

The even tones of Peter Lane filled the chamber. He had suspected that Leo Barry was the Phoenix, from the very moment of Barry's supposed death in his hotel room. The shotgun-torn head of the victim—and particularly the mutilated hands and finger tips—suggested a substitute corpse. Probably an unfortunate tramp, picked up on the Embankment and lured with a five pound note to his death. "But—how—did you first deduce—"

Marsley again stuttered. He was handed a small sheet of paper. It was a typewritten sentence taken verbatim from a dictionary:

PHENIX, n. (*Myth.*) 1. A bird, the only one of its kind, that after living five or six centuries in the Arabian desert, burned itself on a funeral pyre and rose alive from the ashes with renewed youth.

The name was too unusual not to have hidden meaning. It was a grim joke by an intellectual man—a University lecturer—who had gone wrong.

Rutledge Mann, the Shadow's agent, had found out the facts of Barry's earlier career. A business man like John Marsley would not have remembered the classical allusion to the fabled bird. Nor was the name in character with what Cranston had learned of Stanley West.

Barry's choice of the name was his first revealing blunder!

Leo Barry had started the web of murder and intrigue. He had come into possession of facts that seemed to prove John Marsley a murderer.

Barry saw possibilities for huge profit. He decided to use Duncan and his gang to get at Marsley. All he had to do was to let Duke blackmail Marsley and collect the ransom, then kill Duke from ambush and skip with the loot.

It was Leo Barry who killed Duke from the dark recess in the wall of the Surrey cottage. But Marsley had stuffed the suitcases with newspapers instead of money, and Barry was foiled. However, he was able to escape from the cottage and bring Stanley West's name into the crime.

He mistrusted and feared West, and

hoped to frame him by this device. But he failed, because West had an alibi ready.

Barry's fear of Stanley West was justified. The man was an international spy, posing as a Society man. West was after even bigger profit than Barry. He knew something that, in the beginning, even Barry didn't realise: John Marsley was a trusted secret agent, working without pay for the British Government!

"That fact is true, is it not?" Peter Lane murmured.

"It's true," Marsley whispered. He explained hidden things, that the patient investigation of Lamont Cranston had already uncovered.

Peter Lane nodded his head.

"Leo Barry," he declared, "was the crimson-robed figure who subjected your daughter to so embarrassing a disrobing scene in West's flat. He entered and

(Continued on back page.)

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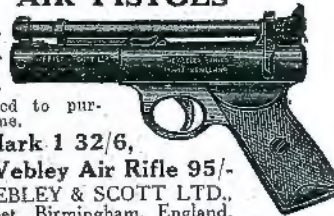
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escaped with a pass-key before West returned. He had searched West's private papers and had learned the vast war secret the spy was after.

"From that moment on, Barry was no longer concerned with blackmailing a single millionaire. He was now coolly prepared to blackmail the nations of the world!"

From an inner pocket of Peter Lane's coat, two objects appeared. One was the missing code book; the other a lengthy cablegram. Marsley gave a choked cry of anxiety at sight of them.

"That message must be sent to Whitehall at once!"

"It has been sent," Cranston said.

There were tears in the banker's eyes.

"What about Skelly? I've got to notify the Home Secretary and arrange a pardon for him. Skelly is one of my agents. He—he begged me to let him die, rather than expose the secret. Now I—I can talk and save him without breaking my pledged word."

"He has already been saved," Peter Lane said. "A message went to the prison one hour after the receipt of the cablegram."

"Thank God!" Alice Dodge cried. "I knew he was innocent! I did the ugly things I did, because I thought Jack was being betrayed by a crooked banker to hide a murder."

Marsley was gazing with awe at the face of the quiet man who had wrought all these miracles.

"You call yourself Peter Lane," he said slowly. "I thought you were a thief, a murderer—I don't know what! Who—who are you?"

He received a wordless answer. Sibilant laughter filled the room with rustling echoes. Cranston glided silently towards the exit.

He had taken a key from the pocket of the dead Phoenix. He unlocked the door, and no one made a move to detain him. The flashing ruby on his finger was the hallmark of a dread identity.

"The Shadow!" John Marsley breathed. "It was the Shadow!"

THE END.

(Write to the Editor and let him know what you think of this story. Address your letters to The Editor, The THRILLER Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. See page 298 for details of next week's grand story, "BIG SHOTS AT WAR," by Walter Edwards.)

SECOND PRIZE-GIVING THIS WEEK!



STOP! This is the end of the September "Footer-Stamps" Competition and up to 300 more of the Free Footballs are now going to be given away to the readers who have scored the highest number of "goals" with "Footer-Stamps" so far.

First of all, there are ten more stamps below depicting six different actions on the football field. Cut them out and try to score another "goal" with them, or use the stamps to finish off any partly completed "goals" you may have.

TO SCORE A "GOAL," remember you only have to collect a complete set of the six stamps (numbered 1 to 6), made up of the following movements: **KICK-OFF—DRIBBLE—TACKLE—HEADER—SHOT—GOAL.** (Note that the "goal" stamp by itself does not count as a "goal.")

If you want to score some other quick "goals" to swell your total, remember that "Footer-Stamps" are also appearing in "Wild West Weekly" and "Detective Weekly" each week.

Now when you have scored as many complete "goals" as possible with the stamps you have collected, write your total ("goals," NOT separate stamps) in the space provided on the coupon below.

Add your name and address to the coupon also, then cut it out whole and pin your sets of goal-scoring stamps only to it. Post in a properly stamped envelope to:

THRILLER "Footer-Stamps" (September),

1, Tallis House, London, E.C.4 (Comp.),

so as to reach there not later than FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30th, 1938.

OVERSEAS READERS—you are in this scheme also and special prizes are to be awarded for the best scores from readers outside the British Isles. In your case, send in as directed above, but note that the closing date is extended to MONDAY, JANUARY 2nd, 1939.

Now when you have sent in your September "goals," keep any odd stamps you have in readiness for the October competition which starts next week. More "Footer-Stamps" will be given, and still more of our Prize Footballs will be offered.

RULES—Up to 300 Footballs will be awarded in the September contest to the readers declaring and sending in the largest number of "goals" scored with "Footer-Stamps." The Editor may extend or amend the prize list in case of too many ties.

Each "goal" must consist of a set of "Footer-Stamps" Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive—all claims for prizes to be made on the proper coupon (given this week). No allowance made for any coupon or stamps mutilated or lost or delayed in the post or otherwise. No correspondence! No one connected with this paper may enter, and the Editor's decision will be final and legally binding throughout.

(N.B.—"Footer-Stamps" may also be collected from the following papers: GEM, MAGNET, MODERN BOY, BOY'S CINEMA, DETECTIVE WEEKLY, TRIUMPH, WILD WEST WEEKLY, CHAMPION and SPORTS BUDGET.)

Ten More "Footer-Stamps" This Week!



..... The THRILLER "FOOTER-STAMPS" (Sept.)

Write in bold figures the number of "goals" you have scored with "Footer-Stamps" and attach your sets of goal-scoring stamps to this coupon.

I agree to accept the Editor's decision as final and binding.

Name

Address

N.B.—No responsibility taken for incorrect totals.